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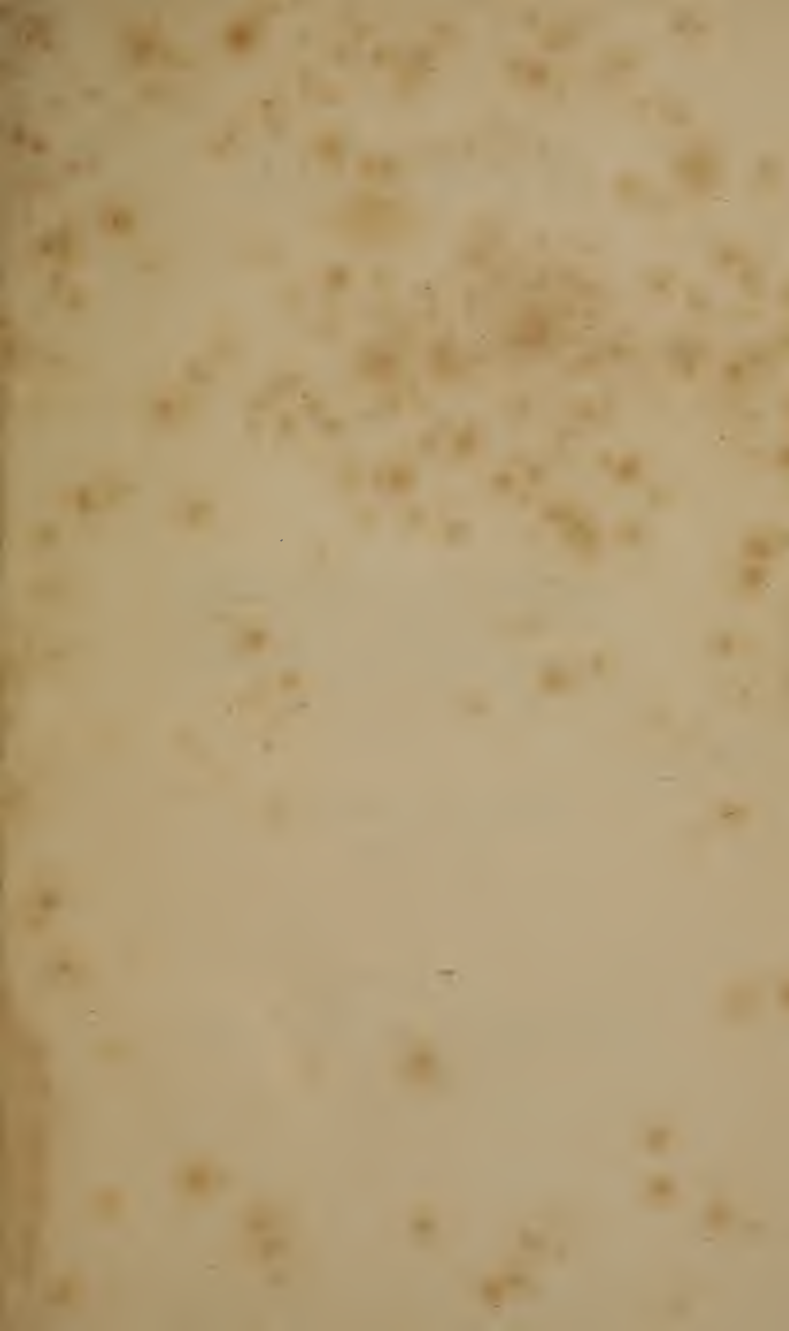
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RIVALRY.

BY

HENRY MILTON.

Is all the counsel that we two have shared,
The sister's vows, the hours that we have spent,
When we have chid the hasty-footed time
For parting us,—Oh, and is all forgot?
All schoolday friendship, childhood innocence?

MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON:

JOHN OLLIVIER, 59, PALL MALL.

1840.



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R I V A L R Y.

CHAPTER I.

LIONEL WALSINGHAM failed not to redeem with scrupulous exactness the promise which he had given to the lawless set with whom he had been compelled to negotiate.

At the appointed hour he proceeded to Axley Fell, the place of rendezvous, accompanied by two servants well armed, and with pistols at his own saddle. Having little confidence in the fidelity of the gang to each other, he deemed it not impossible that some of them, had he proceeded alone and without the means of defence, might have waylaid him on his route, and obtained by violence the whole instead of their portion of the stipulated ransom. No indications of such treachery, however, were

apparent; and at the entrance of the Fell he left his horse with the servants, directing them to remain there until his return, and proceeded on foot alone and unarmed.

Of all the ravines which break up and divide the flanks of the Mendip Hills, Axley Fell is the most gloomy and solitary; and Lionel proceeded to the appointed spot—a large mass of rock at its upper extremity—without observing a single trace of life or cultivation.

There, however, he found the agent of the gang; and the selection of their representative caused him no little surprise. One of the most lovely children he had ever seen was seated on a fragment of stone awaiting his arrival. Her tranquil attitude, her radiant and innocent countenance formed a brilliant speck of life and beauty amidst the dreary scene. He stood opposite to her in silence, curious to know how so young a negociator, for she was not more than eight years of age, would open the conference. There was no sublimity in the terms she used. “You must give me the bag,” was the whole of her address, as she rose from her

seat and approached him, extending her little check apron with both her hands.

“ You are a very young Chancellor of the Exchequer,” said Lionel. “ What is your name ?”

“ I mustn’t tell.”

“ Whom do you come from ?”

“ I mustn’t tell.”

“ Indeed ! Then what do you come here for ?”

“ I come to make you give me the money.”

“ But how am I to know,” asked Walsingham, with a smile, “ that you are the proper person to receive it ? Have you nothing to say to me ?”

“ Oh yes !—Honour and Life.”—And she again held out her apron.

He placed in it the heavy bag, and her little figure swayed forward under the weight. Lionel brushed aside with his hand the thick clustering curls of light gold, and turning her face up toward him, gazed at her high and well-formed forehead, and her blue eyes, bright as diamonds. She shook herself free from his hold, and exclaimed,

“Go away!—Oh dear, do go away! It is so heavy;” and she added in a whisper, “they are all close by.”

Lionel turned away, and sighed as he reflected how certain it was that the clear bright spirit he was quitting would in a few short years have all its lustre tarnished. He looked back as he reached a turn in the ravine. The child was still standing in the same place, resting her loaded apron on the rock. She waved him away impatiently, and another step shut her out from his sight.

The evening was advancing; but a rapid canter soon brought him to Mrs. Mackenzie's cottage. He had hoped to induce Jane Mackenzie to accompany him to the Manor-house, and sanction his intrusion upon his mistress. To his great alarm he learnt, that Miss Mackenzie was then at the Manor-house in consequence of Clara Forrester's serious illness, and that Wilkinson had been called in.

Clara was indeed ill. She had borne up courageously through many succeeding days and nights of terror and of danger; and this very day the conference with Lord Kennis had agi-

tated and distressed her. The overwrought mind, like the body, will have its revenge; and no sooner was Clara left to herself alone and in tranquillity, than a violent re-action of feeling took place, and she was seized with an hysterical attack so continued and so violent as to alarm Mrs. Hannah, and induce her immediately to send for Wilkinson.

Lionel spurred his horse to its utmost speed, as if life and death had depended on the number of seconds which must elapse before he could reach the Manor-house.

His anxious inquiries were first answered by Miss Mackenzie, who although she was nervous, alarmed, and in tears, assured him that Clara was much, much better. Wilkinson when he made his appearance in the oak-parlour treated the affair in a much lighter tone; and said, that instead of being surprised that Miss Forrester's strength and spirits had now given way, they ought rather to have wondered that she had borne up so long and so resolutely. To Lionel's anxiously repeated question, 'Was she in danger,' he replied that the only danger was that she would be quite well to-morrow.

“ If Mr. Lionel,” he continued, “ you are particularly anxious to be wretched and miserable, it does not become me to prevent you; but you had better be as quick about it as possible, or, as we say professionally, the subject will slip through your fingers. I will pledge myself, my dear Sir, that Miss Forrester is as well as ever she was in less than eight-and-forty hours.”

Tranquillized by this assurance, Lionel departed, after entrusting to Jane Mackenzie various tender messages to his mistress.—Mrs. Forrester would, he said, long before that time, have received the news of her safety, and every possible means had also been adopted to communicate the glad intelligence to Mr. Hardinge without an hour’s delay.

The promptitude of his messenger to Bath was proved by the arrival of Mrs. Forrester and Caroline the same evening. Overwhelming indeed, had been the grief and alarm they had endured on their darling Clara’s account, and their feelings had been rendered doubly bitter by the reflection that had they warned her of Sir Edward Forrester’s threats of

violence she might have escaped the danger. But they had both considered his insulting language as merely the momentary outbreking of disappointment. They had never supposed it possible that he could really contemplate any act of revenge or insult, and they had been unwilling to alarm Clara by imaginary fears.

The presence of her mother and her dear Caroline was the most soothing medicine that could have been administered to the invalid ; and as they sat by her bed-side, and she held a hand of each in hers, and gazed upon them, tears of gratitude to Heaven relieved her overburdened heart, and the deep and tranquil slumber which succeeded dispelled on the morrow all traces of illness, except that the roses were still absent from her cheek.

She had much of sorrow and of joy to tell them ; and although young Walsingham's determination to leave England, and her own sad forebodings of the result, threw a gloom over the brilliant prospects which lay before her, still Mrs. Forrester's bosom swelled with a mother's pride as she looked at her lovely daughter, and thought how she would grace

the elevated rank which she was convinced awaited her.

The old Earl lost no time in visiting Mrs. Forrester in all due form, and now the great subject of anxiety was Hardinge's return. He reached East Leighton on the evening of the fifth day, delighted again to embrace his dear niece in health and spirits, but showing clearly by his haggard look and pale cheek how intense his grief and anxiety had been.

Grave conferences were held among the seniors as to the proposed union ; and Lord Kennis renewed his entreaties to Lionel that he would leave the war to take its own course, and consent to remain quietly at home, the happiest man in England. Great as was the temptation, Lionel would not be moved from his purpose. It was a point of honour with him to join his new regiment, and his father's urgent entreaties were firmly although respectfully resisted. He said that he should not be worthy the affection of such a woman as Clara Forrester, if he allowed any earthly consideration to interfere with his sense of duty and of honour, that she herself would cease to love him if he did so.

Earnestly he implored her to consent to an immediate marriage ; and he at length won over his father to support this request, but Clara was not less firm than her lover. She did not utter a single word to dissuade him from leaving England ; she felt the impropriety, the impossibility of doing so ; but she remained unshaken in her determination never to marry Lionel Walsingham until he quitted the army.

Thus, by a foolish punctilio, when every other obstacle to their union was removed, the young man rejected the happiness which was offered him, although his heart was almost broken by the effort.

Immediately after Hardinge's return a formal invitation to dinner had been sent to Mrs. Forrester by Lord Kennis, and as from day to day Lionel's departure was expected, the next day but one was fixed for the party, and Miss Chamberlayne was of course one of the invited guests.

That fair lady still remained in a state of nervous indecision as to her poetic tribute. Her conviction of the paramount and absolute necessity of its production was never shaken for a

moment ; but it had not yet been commenced, nor had she even decided from what deathless bard she should borrow her foundation. The invitation she had now received absolutely overwhelmed her with despair. That the tribute must be produced before this grand nuptial party was certain, and there remained little more than twenty-four hours for selection, invention, composition, and presentation ; add to which her favourite gown required inspection, —perhaps alteration.

It was about two o'clock when the fatal card reached her. After a quarter of an hour's consideration she rang the bell ; and on the appearance of her domestic, said in a firm but somewhat melancholy tone :

“ Phœbe, I shall not have any dinner to-day.”

“ No dinner, ma'am ?” cried the astonished maiden. “ Goodness gracious ! for why ?—and I have got in two such lovely mutton chops—such beauties !”

Miss Chamberlayne sighed, but with a composed smile said, “ There are important considerations, Phœbe, which preclude me from

eating any dinner to-day. I will have tea early, half-past six. Do not let any human creature in who calls, not even Mrs. Wilkinson, and don't come into this room until I ring the bell. Retire, Phœbe, retire !”

Phœbe stared, and departed ; and immediately communicated to Mr. Battersby, who was resting himself for an hour or two in the kitchen, that the event she had always foreseen was now come to pass, and that ‘her missus was gone clean mad with her love, and her books, and her poetry, poor dear old soul !’

“ Yes !” exclaimed Miss Chamberlayne, as soon as she was alone, and whilst, clasping her hands together, she walked backwards and forwards—“ yes, it will etherialize my soul ! Yes, and the sacrifice ! What is it in consideration of the immortal object ?”

She approached her book-case with a feverish conviction that not a moment was to be lost. She took down Milton, Spenser, Dryden, Pope, Johnson, and Parnell, and ranged them on her largest table—the table which ought ere long to have groaned under the weight of the ‘two beauties.’ She thought of Lycidas ; of Una

and the Red-cross Knight ; of the Rape of the Lock ; the episode of Lavinia ; and all the stealings-away in ‘ The Hermit.’ None of them harmonized with her feelings. She still paused and hesitated ; the precious moments flew on ; she heard the clock strike four, and the sound thrilled her with horror. She began to feel unwell—she had the head-ache, a palpitation of the heart, a stitch in her side, the heart-burn, a strong tendency to the lumbago, and was convinced that she was going to be very ill indeed.

On a sudden a gleam of good fortune directed her to Alexander’s Feast. It was the very thing itself. She paraphrased the whole of the first stanza with a rapidity which she felt to be inspiration. All her pains and maladies forsook her, and she was as vivacious as the schoolboy, when first his master puts him into nonsense verses.

She tried her hand at the second stanza, but alas ! the burst of poetic fury was over. She could not summon up a single idea.

‘ The line, too, labour’d, and the words moved slow.’

Symptoms of the heart-burn began to re-

appear, and the stitch in the side was creeping back into its former place. By six o'clock she had dragged herself on a dozen lines further, and then she fairly and absolutely broke down. She rang the bell, and ordered tea ; but Phœbe in a decisive tone informed her that it was not half-past six, and the water did not boil.

"Blow the fire!" said Miss Chamberlayne, with an abstracted glance at the ceiling.

Phœbe departed, and again the bell was rang. Nature and habit both vindicated their power.

"Phœbe," said the spinster, in a tone of pensive resignation, "I will have one of the two chops—the smallest—and mind, a good deal of pepper."

Phœbe first shut the door, and then began to laugh ; she peeped through the key-hole, and saw her poor mistress, her hands clasped, and her face the very picture of woe, and departed, saying, "Well, she is as mad as a March hare, poor dear soul!—the smallest—we'll see."

"Ah!" said Miss Chamberlayne, gazing unconsciously out of the window at two children

who were beating a donkey, “ah! so it is! ill usage and calamity! nothing else in this world for any of us. But,” she added, after a long pause, “if the mind and body are the same thing, as Dr. Thingamee says they are, how can I expect my poetry to be powerful, when I am sinking with absolute starvation?”

She resumed her seat at her writing-table. No—Alexander’s Feast would not do. Should she try Pope’s Ode to St. Cecilia’s Day? She read it over. The last stanza was just the very thing; it would turn beautifully. She began it at once, and got as far as the sixth line, when in came the tea-things.

“No, my good Phœbe; I’ll wait till seven o’clock.”

“The chop *is down*, ma’am,” said Phœbe, in a firm tone.

“Take it up again.—No?—well, I suppose I must. Heavenly powers! every thing conspires to my destruction. What am I to do? What is to become of me?”

She quickly made her extra-strong tea, and resumed her labours. Before long her sensitive ear detected the jingling of a dish-cover

rapidly approaching. She laid down her pen, and placed herself at the tea-table. Never was a mutton-chop more wanted; never was one better dressed, or more keenly enjoyed! She looked at the uncovered bone, as it stood erect in the centre of her plate, a solitary, meatless ruin—the mockery of its former beauty! and she sighed. She arose—approached the bell—sighed—paused—sighed again—and rang.

“Phœbe,” she cried, “I think I must have the other chop.”

“Of course, ma’am, you must. What mortal use can it be for you to starve yourself?”

The chop appeared—and disappeared; the oft-replenished teapot at length was dry; and Miss Chamberlayne sat down at her desk, with the determination not to rise from it until her poetic labours were completed.

Why need we dwell on the painful result? Nature again asserted her dominion, and feeble inspiration was succeeded by irresistible drowsiness. In short, the second mutton-chop—‘the large one’—had completely settled the business. She very soon perceived that it was so; and throwing down the unused pen, started

up from her desk, and with clasped hands and eyes filled with tears, walked backwards and forwards in a paroxysm of grief.

“Miserable creature that I am!” she exclaimed. “Yes, I felt what would happen as every mouthful of that detested chop went down my throat. Yes! every thing consolidates to obstruct my inspiration! Phœbe, Phœbe,” she said to her domestic, who was removing the relics of her misfortune, “Phœbe, I must go to bed; I am exceedingly ill.”

“Shall I go and fetch the Doctor, ma’am?” asked the girl, screening a very broad grin behind the corner of her apron.

“No, no, child; nonsense! I’ll go to bed; but mind you call me to-morrow exactly at seven. Yes,” she added, as with a heavy foot, and still heavier heart, she ascended the stairs; “yes, I will try coffee. If that doesn’t revivify my powers, nothing will.”

Our anxious heroine made sad work of it the next morning. She wrote out on separate bits of paper the several passages which she had paraphrased, and tried to shift them backwards and forwards into something like order.

The more she did so, the more she perceived that she had begun the tribute at the wrong end. In one place Mr. Hardinge was singing, in another he was travelling; but there was a chasm between the two, which her poetic architecture could not span. In her hurry and agitation, although many long hours were devoted to the task, she could not put it to rights, and she dared not delay its transmission beyond three o'clock. Cobbling it up, therefore, as well as she could, but dissatisfied with the style, insecure as to the spelling, and broken-hearted from her conviction of its deficiency in poetic power, she sent it with an explanatory letter to the Manor-house. The prose and poetry were as follows:—

“ To Charles Hardinge and his Niece, to the Restorer and the Restored.

“ Pardon, my generous friends, the coldly feeble, and the frail attempt, which this hesitating sheet conveys: and, oh, believe it to emanate, as I need not say it does, from the spontaneous raptures of o'erwhelming joy. And oh, my friends, let your indulgent bosoms remember how hard the task to twine the

deathless eloquence of two immortal bards into one cord of friendly sympathy; to weave, if I may so express myself more luminously, the glorious raptures of a Dryden and a Pope into one triple cord of poesy, with my feeble thread of pure affection.

“ The votive Tribute, as is, alas, but too distinctly visible, is only the instantaneous result of unpremeditated thought, so rapidly produced, that I had no time to insinuate one quarter of my own individual feelings. But the generous Charles Hardinge, the lovely Clara Forrester, will they not, oh yes they will, in the vulgar language of the herd, accept the will for the deed : or, let me more appropriately say—the mental, the imaginary impulse for the corporeal reality ?

“ In the breathless haste of the sincerest friendship, Adieu ! both Adieu !

“ ISABEL.”

“ P.S.—My mind, combining with the solar beam, confirms the persuasion, that we shall dine in the grand saloon. Might it not have an appropriately pleasing effect if Charles Hardinge’s mellifluous voice would recite it from

the music-gallery after all the servants are gone away; or, if your modesty condemns the self-applause, would the dear Earl, with his fine parliamentary periods, pronounce the praise?"

CONSANGUINITY AND VALOUR.

A TRIBUTARY ODE.

'Twas at the rapturous feast for Clara won,
By Lionel the Earl of Kennis's brave Son;
Modest in pensive state,
The sweet young hero sat,
On Valour's vigorous throne.
Neighbours and friends were placed around
Their hearts with pleasure and with transport bound,
So should desert like his be crowned.

The lovely Clara by his side,
Sat blooming soon to be his bride,
In flower of youth and beauty's pride.
Happy, happy, happy, pair!
None but the brave,
Who storms a cave,
None but the brave deserves the fair.

Charles Hardinge seated nigh,
East Leighton's high-born squire,
Heaved fond affection's fervid sigh,
Which his niece's joys inspire.
He sung of Clara, fair and good,
By too severe a fate,
Stolen, stolen, stolen, stolen
From his own estate,
To dens of weltering blood.

In a vile cave exposed she lies ;
 She dares not close her timid eyes ;
 Deserted at her utmost need,
 Resolved in virtue's cause to bleed.

* * * *

Now let a louder note inflate the shell,
 Now let my muse Charles Hardinge's actions tell.
 How bold in Law above the long-robed crowd,
 His silver voice in virtue's cause was loud !
 How calm in peace amidst his native groves,
 He wooed the muses of his early loves !
 But when his niece's cause provokes to arms,
 How consanguinity his bosom warms !
 This road and that alarmed he tries,
 No Clara's form consoles his eyes.
 —Ah ! see, into Scotland he anxiously flies !
 Gretna's anvils resound with his eloquent cries !
 Hark, hark, he sighs, he sighs !
 Yet e'en in grief his niece's name he sung,
 Clara, dear Clara, trembled on his tongue ;
 The villains shall, yes, yes, they shall be hung.

* * * *

At length the bold young Lion came
 Courageous with herculean frame ;
 And calm while guns and pistols round him roar,
 Enlarged the maiden's narrow bounds ;
 And gave her gaolers dreadful wounds ;
 And made them feel the fear, that she had felt before.

He came ! and they consented
 To hear the Lover's prayer.
 The villains all relented,
 And gave him back his fair.
 Thus Love could prevail,
 O'er hill and o'er dale,

A conquest how hard and how glorious !
 Tho' fate had fast bound her
 With nine ruffians round her,
 Yet Valour and Love were victorious !

* * * *

Thus when her Lionel his Clara frees,
 Sublimely stern the victor raised his strain.
 Whilst Leighton sees,
 Her Hardinge's niece
 Descend from the Cheddar to the plain.
 Transported relatives stood round,
 And words grew verses at the sound.
 Then o'er his head let banners wave,
 And Hymen's nuptial crown,
 For he boldly flew up to the cave,
 And brought his Angel down.

In about an hour's time Bill Batts was again despatched to the Manor-house, with a list of verbal corrections, enclosed in the following short note to Clara :—

“ Will my beloved Clara, with her pen of Italian elegance, intersperse these emendations which my aberrations from tranquillity have demanded.

“ Fondly adieu,

“ ISABEL.”

“ P.S.—If your transcendant but too applause-evading uncle repels the task of vocal recita-

tion, tell him, my sweet young friend, that I myself will strain every nerve to subdue my terrors, and will attempt, if possible, to deliver it myself. I think I could go through the vocal task, provided I am allowed to stand quite at the back of the music gallery, and am obscured in a thick green veil."

The messenger brought back a very kind reply from Clara. Both her uncle and Captain Walsingham, she said, commissioned her to unite their thanks with her own for the friendly but too complimentary effusion. It would be treasured up in their memories, but its public recitation they all thought had better be dispensed with.

Miss Chamberlayne sighed; but she felt that she had done her duty: and wrapping her rough copy up in a green veil, she put it into her pocket, determined to be prepared, should any alteration of opinion take place.

But although they did dine in the grand saloon, the Earl's favourite apartment during the heat of summer; and although Miss Chamberlayne cast many a glance up to the music

gallery, yet no opening was afforded her for poetic display. Indeed the party had but little of the gay cheerfulness which Lord Kennis delighted to create and enjoy. Nothing could exceed the flattering attentions which he paid to Mrs. Forrester; and even if he had not already won the mother's heart by his preference for her lovely Clara, he would now have done so by the marked though quiet attentions which he showed to the gentle Caroline. But despite all his efforts, he was abstracted and out of spirits. That very morning the dreaded letter, with its broad official seal, had been received from the Horse Guards, informing Lionel that his regiment was ordered to embark, and that he must join it at Portsmouth at the expiration of a week. Unwilling to destroy the cheerfulness of the day, Lord Kennis and Lionel determined not to mention this until the morrow; but it pressed heavily on the old man's heart: and although he exerted himself to the utmost, attacked Hardinge about the widow, and questioned Miss Chamberlayne as to her progress in the Steam-enginiad, still a gloom

hung over the party which not all Lionel's animation could dispel ; and Clara Forrester left the Castle, persuaded that some calamity was about to overwhelm her ; and, with the quick perception of love, she more than suspected the truth.

Miss Chamberlayne returned, in the Vicar's carriage, to her Bower, but *her* labours and her handmaiden's consternations were not over for the day. Instead of asking for a bed-candle, and going quietly up stairs, as might have been expected, she threw off upon the parlour-table her white kid gloves, the Dobsonian turban, and various other minor articles of costume, and in a solemn voice exclaimed,

“ Phœbe, my garden-bonnet, my shawl, my cloak, and my thick clogs !”

Phœbe stared and obeyed. To her various proposals :—‘ Should she run for Bill Batts ? Should she take the key and go with her ? Would she have the lanthorn ?’—her mistress returned no answer, beyond shaking her head and sighing.

It was a miserable drizzling night, with

only sufficient moonlight to enable Phœbe to perceive that her unhappy mistress turned down the lane which led to the mill-stream. The poor girl was terribly alarmed, still she could not believe that her mistress was going ‘to do herself a mischief, because she had taken her best things off.’ Our fair spinster had no such deadly intention: but she was fond of establishing points of resemblance between herself and Sappho. She knew that the tenth muse had thrown herself and her poetry into the sea, and the wish to follow the example, in part, became too strong to be resisted. The recent neglect of her tribute was the greatest poetical misfortune she had ever suffered, and she was determined at one and the same time, to revenge herself upon the world, and to soothe her own feelings, by giving the rough copy of it to the waves by moonlight. This romantic resolve was so strong as to conquer all fear of solitude, darkness, or the miller’s dog.

She soon reached the mill, and, extracting from her pocket and their green envelope the

ill-used lines, she tore them, page by page, into minute bits, and raising her arm above her head cast them into the stream, accompanying the process with very appropriate ejaculations, and summoning all the powers of vengeance to witness her despair.

For some time none of them appeared to notice her appeal, but at last the miller's dog was roused, and immediately gave tongue, and in an instant after a window was thrown open, and the miller's hoarse voice was heard :—

“ Who 's there, stealing my ducks? Wait half a minute, my fine fellow, till I get my blunderbuss, and I'll shoot you as dead as a herring.”

Miss Chamberlayne was thunderstruck and paralyzed with fear ; she had seen the miller's blunderbuss a hundred times, and she gave herself up for a dead woman.

“ 'Tis me, 'tis me, my dear, dear good man,” she cried out, but in a voice which fear rendered inaudible. Throwing all the remaining verses in the river, or at least attempting to do so, for the wind caught the fond strains and

lodged them on the muddy bank, she rushed up the lane in such trepidation that both her clogs came off in the way : the dog barking, and the miller shouting after her—" Stop thief! stop thief!" with the utmost power of his lungs.

Dirty, wet, out of breath with exertion and terror, clogless and broken-hearted, she reached her home, and the exclamations of excessive joy with which Phœbe only half disguised her laughter, her quick succession of speeches,— "What a night! What could have got the clogs? Something warm, Ma'am, to keep out the cold?" destroyed the small remnant of the spinster's equanimity, and, in a voice better suited to Hill-side Cottage than to Eglantine Bower, she ordered her to leave the room that moment, and the house that day month.

To complete her woes the miller's wife next morning brought the dirty mangled fragment of her rough copy, and the clogs, with her good man's duty, and he was afeared there had been some mistake : but he thought it had been morally impossible she should be out such

a muggy night ; that he never should have knowed whose clogs they was if it hadn't been for the poetry : and that if she would send him word when she was a-coming to the mill of nights, he would take care not to frighten her ; but it was past belief the power of ducks they had lost the last six weeks.

CHAPTER II.

It is necessary that we should relate the events which took place in the smugglers' cave, after Lionel had borne away his lovely prize.

Sir Edward Forrester and Tarleton lay on the naked floor of the rock bound with such violence, that as their veins swelled under the strong cords the pressure became every moment more intensely painful. Edward Wheatley, worn out by fatigue and anxiety, threw himself on his rough couch, whilst the universally accomplished Mrs. Higgins, assisted by one of the gang, was attending to the wounded man, whose hurt was severe. The others, who were quickly joined by Lionel's two guides, were all collected in a close knot round the captain discussing their future proceedings.

Isolated as their hiding place appeared to

be, it was the case with these men, as with all others who pursue the same lawless courses, that their means of communication with the world around them were much more frequent and regular than could have been supposed. No four-and-twenty hours passed without two, and frequently more, written messages being conveyed to them by means of a thin cord, let down by some friendly hand from the summit of the cliffs. The visits of their messengers were known and understood by all those whose employment lay among the hills; but the most virtuous shepherd likes French brandy. In fact the contraband traffic was very generally indulged in throughout the whole region, and the intercourse between the cliffs and the neighbouring towns was connived at, and assisted by many very good sort of people, who would have recoiled with horror from the commission of the crimes which they were very willing to profit by.

That very night the captain had received a letter from Jessop, their agent at Axbridge. It told him that suspicions were abroad, that

the gang had been connected with the abduction of Miss Forrester, that large rewards had been offered for their apprehension, and that the sooner the business was brought to an end the better: that, worst of all, he feared there would be both difficulty and danger in obtaining the sixty guineas from the person in whose hands they had been placed, and that every hour would increase this. He concluded by saying, that although Sparkes had taken his departure, he was convinced he himself was watched by some other emissary of the two Londoners, and counselled them to have their eyes about them, and play their cards carefully — ‘sharply if need were.’

All this their leader now disclosed to them, contrary to his original intention, which had been to have first obtained more detailed particulars by a personal interview with Jessop. Their indignation was great, and many a fierce oath was uttered, and many a look of vengeance directed towards their prisoners: to both of whom the short period of the discussion was one of intense anxiety, but endured by

them with feelings as different as their natures. Tarleton, cool and collected, strained every faculty to enable him from their looks, their gestures, and the few louder words which reached him, to divine what their purpose was: whilst Forrester, shuddering with fear, lay gazing upon them almost unconscious of what he saw.

“ Philip Tarleton,” he cried in a whisper, which fear rendered scarcely intelligible, “ what will they do to us ? ”

“ Be patient,” answered his companion, “ and you will know before long.”

“ For God’s sake speak to them, Tarleton ; offer them anything.—I’ll sign any bond—I’ll promise them every thing they ask.”

“ It is useless,” replied Tarleton, “ I know it is ; be silent, and listen.”

Sir Edward obeyed ; but soon the suspense became unendurable. He made an effort to clear his voice from the nervous terror which almost choked him, and cried out, “ My good fellows, for God’s sake, don’t keep us bound here in this savage manner ! unbind us, and

let us be off. I'll pledge my honour that we will take no steps against you."

The men looked round at him, and laughed insultingly.

"I'll sign a bond for five thousand pounds this instant, if you will let ——"

"Fool!" growled the Captain, sternly, and, with the rest of the gang, proceeded with their discussion.

Forrester again implored his companion to speak to them.

"I will," said Tarleton, "although I know it to be useless."

In a calm tone, and in a few words, clear and to the purpose, he pointed out to them how contrary to their own interest it would be were any violence offered to Sir Edward Forrester, or himself. But the appeal, as he had foreseen, was useless; for although whilst he was speaking, Holcroft, by his raised hand, constrained his companions to an unwilling silence, yet when he ended they turned away without deigning to answer him; and very soon their conference broke up.

It was at once apparent, from the move-

ments of all the party, that they had resolved to abandon the cavern. Arms and clothes were collected, packages made up, and in less than half an hour the fire and the candles were extinguished, and, one by one, the men quitted the cave, the captain and his helpmate remaining to the last. As she departed she approached the place where the two prisoners were lying, and holding the light, which she bore in her hand, so as to illuminate their faces, she gazed earnestly at them with a look of compassion that paralyzed Forrester with terror. But neither his abject entreaties, nor the stern questions of Tarleton could obtain one word from her or her brutal husband, and they departed, leaving the two wretched men without food or light, agonized in body, and convinced that they were doomed to perish by a dreadful and a lingering death, and that their prison would become their tomb.

Forrester sank at once into utter despair as darkness closed around them. He wept like a child, and then, with sudden fickleness, burst into invectives against his companion, as the

cause of all he endured. Some touch of compassion and remorse came over Tarleton. He bore the terms of obloquy which his patron heaped upon him, without replying to them ; nay, he tried to soothe his misery and to induce him to meet his fate with composure, but the attempt was fruitless.

Ere long the black darkness gave way before the morning, and accustomed, as their eyes had now become to the owl's light of the cavern, they could perceive the objects around them. Tarleton scanned his companion's face with a steady gaze ; how changed from the gay, arrogant, bold-looking Sir Edward Forrester of a month before ! His features were shrunk and livid with fear ; drops of cold sweat fell from his forehead, and, as he lay on the rock, his whole frame trembled from head to foot. He turned away from him with disgust.

Sir Edward perceived it, and bursting into a sudden fury, exclaimed, " Villain ! Fiend !—My God, my God, that I should have been idiot, fool, ass enough, to trust my life in the hands of a brutish fiend, who, even at such a

time as this, sneers at me, instead of uttering a single word of hope or comfort ! You are a villain, a base, treacherous villain !” He paused for breath, and then continued with impotent rage :—“ I hate you, and I have always hated you for the slavery you have kept me in, and now you have brought me into this misery, you will not exert yourself to save me.”

“ What power, what means have I of doing so ?” said Tarleton ; “ all I can do is to set you the example of meeting your fate like a man.”

“ Yes,” cried Forrester, “ it is well enough for you, a broken-down, beggarly, detected gambler. You may be sick of life ; I am not. Did not you undertake to manage all this accursed job ? You are a liar and a cheat if you don’t contrive to get me out of it.”

Tarleton laughed scornfully, and replied, with his accustomed indifference :—“ I should have supposed, Sir Edward Forrester, that in your terror you had forgotten that I am bound like yourself, and unable to assist you, were I not certain that such words as these would never have passed your lips, had you not

known my inability to chastise you for them. But let that pass : let us not, my poor friend, fettered and doomed as we are, debase ourselves by useless and unmanly railing, like two ill-tempered fish-wives in the stocks. Believe me, Forrester, you will not shorten the dreary lingering hours of death by senseless abuse. All those who plan a dangerous game must make up their minds to abide by the consequences. No error of mine has led to this, nor would it even now have happened, had you shown the same steadiness of nerve that I have done."

"How," interrupted Forrester, "could I have prevented that Walsingham—curse him—from bribing the villains?"

"Had you," answered Tarleton, "but shown constancy and courage, the knaves would have submitted to you, and sent that meddling fool to feed the rats with Robinson yonder."

"Rats!" muttered the Baronet, with an increased shuddering. "Oh, if they attack me now! Madman that I was to undertake such a scheme as this! Not all the women that ever lived are worth the misery I suffer."

“ Did I not tell you,” said Tarleton, scornfully, “ that you were not fitted for the task you undertook ?”

“ And what good does your fitness do you ?” cried Forrester, petulantly.

“ Great good. It enables me to bear and despise this reverse, and not to yield broken-hearted and spiritless before the danger. It enables me to face death, and to smile at it.”

“ Tarleton,” cried Sir Edward, with sudden eagerness, “ it is broad day-light ; some one may be near enough to hear us. Let us scream out for assistance.”

“ Absolutely useless. Do you not remember the Captain’s telling us that a pistol fired in this cave could not be heard by any one walking through the defile ?”

Hopeless as the attempt was, Sir Edward in the wildness of his despair raised his voice to the utmost, and uttered shriek after shriek, till all the recesses of the cave re-echoed again and again ; and despite the chidings of his companion, continued the useless effort until absolute exhaustion compelled him to desist.

Meanwhile Tarleton's keen eye had detected, by the aid of the increasing light, in one of the recesses of the cave two or three packages, which it was evident were intended to be removed. Feeling assured from this that some of the ruffians would again visit the cave, he augured that the destruction of himself and his companion was not intended. With cruel malice he permitted a long time to elapse before he cheered his companion with this ray of hope. Forrester's abuse, although he affected to despise it, had wounded him, and he resolved to punish him. When at length he told him, his delight was as excessive as his despair had been before. He hailed two or three dirty bundles as messengers from heaven, considered his freedom as certain, and appeared to have no other sorrows than those which the tight cords and the want of breakfast inflicted upon him.

The long lingering day wore on, and by degrees the cave was again shrouded in pitchy darkness. Tarleton's hopes sank within him, and poor Sir Edward was again in utter de-

spair. He was dying with hunger; and the rats, his dreaded foes, and now certainly not dreaded without cause, began to be very disagreeably audible. Tarleton reminded him that the robbers could not return to the cave during the day; but the argument failed to console him.

Midnight, as far as Tarleton could calculate, must have long been passed, and no aid approached them. He himself began to consider their fate as hopeless, and that their death had only been delayed by a savage desire to prolong their misery.

At length the low noise which always accompanied the ascent of persons from without, was distinctly heard, and the feet of two men sounded on the floor of the cave. It was an awful moment, and all the philosophy of Tarleton could not restrain his heart from beating rapidly. A light was struck, and two or three candles soon cast their uncertain light through the cavern, and showed the prisoners the faces of their visitors; one was Holcroft, and Tarleton augured no good from his arrival; the

other was a rough, bulky, dogged-looking fellow.

Forrester at once called out, and implored them to give him food, to unbind him, and save him from dying of hunger. The men looked at him with a careless air, but vouchsafed no answer. Tarleton then addressed them.

“We are,” he said, in a composed and impressive tone, “entirely in your power. I know it, and I am little disposed to bandy words and upbraidings with you. But be your intentions what they may, have the courage of men, and avow them at once.”

“A little patience, master,” replied Holcroft, sneeringly, “and it will save us the trouble of jabbering.”

“Give me some food, for God’s sake !” cried Forrester, in an abject tone. “I am famished—absolutely famished.”

Holcroft laughed. “Famished ? No, master Baronet, famishing don’t begin the first day, and that you will find out before long. You’ll see soon enough,” he continued, in reply to Tarleton’s question, “what our plans are ; there is no fear of your mistaking them.”

“What can you gain by our destruction?” said Tarleton. “Kindness shown to us may enrich you for life ; but to murder us can only increase the danger to yourself and your companions.”

Holcroft, who had been employed in collecting together a quantity of chain such as is used to harness farm-horses, ceased from his occupation, and approached his victims. “Masters,” he said, “we know our own interest, and the life we lead makes us neither rash nor stupid, or we should not lead it long. We cannot profit by you ; we dare not trust you ; we dare not put our lives into your hands. I won’t mince matters. You are a bold cheating rogue, and he there is a sneaking coward. We dare not trust either of you. As far as you are concerned, we care not one curse what you suffer, or whether you live or die ; we do with you just what we think the best for ourselves.”

“And what,” asked Tarleton, “does your interest lead you to do?”

“Patience, patience, my smart chap ; we won’t keep you in a puzzle long.”

“Heaven and earth !” cried Forrester in a

tone of agony. " I'll give you my bond for ten thousand pounds. I pledge you my soul I will. I'll pledge my word, my honour—I'll take any oath."

" It won't do, master," answered Holcroft, deliberately disentangling the links of the chain, and laying it in order on the floor; " it won't do; we know your devices, his at least, and all his plottings at Axbridge. It won't do."

" Punish him, then," cried Forrester; " but for God's sake spare me! I can and will be grateful to you for ever. It is all his fault—all his doing."

" What a sneaking rascal!" said Holcroft to his companion; and then refusing all further conference, went on with his work. He selected a large log of wood from a pile within the cave, and he and the other man, who had been collecting brush-wood and coal, dragged it to the fire-place, which was formed by a narrow recess, on one side of which the rock projected forward, and on the other a large mass of stone, which had fallen from the roof,

lay two or three feet in advance. The men lifted one end of the piece of timber over this fragment, and fixing the other end securely behind the projecting rock, laid it on the top of the fuel, and Holcroft then fastened the chain round the middle of the beam.

Tarleton's mind in spite of his assumed apathy was in a state of feverish agitation. He gazed with an intenseness of curiosity at the dwarfish ruffian's systematic proceedings, and felt that he was taking a childish, an absurd interest in their result altogether distinct from what their importance to himself might be. He shook off this mental weakness with a scornful laugh, and more tranquilly awaited the conclusion of the scene.

Holcroft, as the arrangements proceeded became so pleased with his occupation—it so strongly reminded him of some of his kind actions on the coast of Africa—that he grew quite chatty and good tempered.

“ I have often before now,” he said, addressing his silent companion, “ laid traps to catch blackbirds without wings; but I never schemed

such a pretty contrivance as this to let two knaves have a chance of getting off. Curse me if they would be worth the trouble, if it wasn't for the fun of the thing!"

He approached Tarleton, and untying the cord by which he was bound down to a large iron ring on the floor, assisted him to rise. He then passed the chain through the same ring, and coiling it two or three times round the body of his victim fastened it behind his shoulders with deliberate care, altering the length again and again, until it exactly suited his purpose, with as much unconcern as if he had been adjusting the tackle of a sail. Tarleton uttered not a word, submitted without an attempt at resistance. Any such attempt must indeed have been fruitless, as his hands were bound upon his breast, and the attendant executioner stood by ready to assist his principal. But although the uselessness of resistance was apparent, there was something almost heroic in the motionless tranquillity and calm disdain of Tarleton's attitude and manner. The slave-sailor appeared to feel it, and more than

once looked him sternly in the face, as if to detect what were his inward sufferings.

When he had quite satisfied himself as to the exactness of his arrangements, he said to Tarleton, "There, my smart chap, there's as pretty a bit of g'ometry as you'd wish to see; you can't gnaw through these links, I fancy. And now I'll be fair with you, and if you die, you shan't say I deceived you. If the fire that chap there is lighting doesn't take it into its head to go out, that oak beam will be burnt in two before six hours are over; and long before then the sea will be between us and your devil's imps at Axbridge, curse 'em. A pull at your back-stay,"—he laughed at what he considered so facetious a phrase,—“will drag the beam out of the fire a foot or two, till that piece of rock stops it. If it breaks then, you are free men; if it doesn't, the strength of twenty men wouldn't budge it an inch further. So don't haul away too soon, my fine fellow, before the beam's burnt through, or you and the blubberer there are both dead men. There,” he added, taking from his pocket a large clasped

knife, and laying it open on the edge of the table, "once reach that and you will manage to hack off each others ruffles, aye or to cut each other's throat, if the fancy takes you. Come along, Bill; 'twill burn."

"Shan't I give the poor devils a little more wood?" asked his hitherto silent comrade.

"Not an ounce; it will spoil my cookery, if it is done too fast. We're showing them a devilish sight more mercy than they would have shown us. Let's be off." They each collected one or two bundles and prepared to depart, but Holcroft again approached his victims, and said in his most sarcastic and insulting tone, "It would be a sin to leave you without a word of advice, poor fellows; a bit of a sermon. Dearly beloved, mark and learn this: If ever you live to deal with people of our calling again, deal with them openly and like gentlemen. We overlook little tricks and rogueries in men like ourselves; but we never forgive them in high-flying chaps like you. Good night, gentlemen, good night:" and turning back he added, with his detestable

laugh, “ You’ll give an eye to the fire every now and then, I dare say.”

Through all the harassing events which had occurred, through all the lengthened hours of suffering and restraint, Tarleton’s constancy had remained unshaken. It gave way before the slow uncertainty of his present trial. The petulant complaining of his companion had ceased from the moment that the two ruffians left the cave ; and as if paralyzed with anxiety, he had become perfectly silent. Tarleton marked not the alteration. He stood gazing intensely on the faint spark of light, which one moment showed itself amidst the half-dried branches, and the next was lost—straining his ear to detect the crackling of the ignited wood from which at times the blue moist-looking smoke ascended with a hissing noise—then ceased altogether, and then after an agonizing interval again became visible. Condemned to inactivity and suspense, whilst the question of his life or death was as it were debated before him, the intensity of the anxiety shook his nerves : his brain reeled ; and all the objects around

him seemed indistinct and unreal. Again and again he endeavoured to rouse himself and to recover his self-possession. The effort was vain : a half-delirium overcame him, and he, whose courage and cold philosophy would have enabled him to face an assured death without shrinking, could not endure the lengthened uncertainty, the inactive suspense of this balancing between life and death. He turned away ; and casting himself with his face upon the rock, lay in a state of stupor, all the powers of his mind suspended and overthrown.

The paroxysm was violent and long ; and more than once had Forrester called on him before he recovered his faculties so far as to perceive the glow of light which now illumined the cave. The sight brought him no pleasure or relief. A crushing headache and a burning thirst oppressed him, and the consciousness that he had given way and yielded to the terror of the moment made him feel depressed and self-abased.

Not so his unstable companion. As rapidly elated as cast down, he already considered him-

self safe and at liberty; and he wearied Tarleton, whom he now again addressed as his dear friend, his dear Tarleton, with inquiries as to how soon they should be free, how long it would require to burn through the cursed beam, where they should go, what they should do, what they should eat? Tarleton vouchsafed no answer: he felt galled at his own defeat; and in sullen unconcern refused all intercourse with his companion.

The fuel had been so arranged that a long time elapsed before the fire reached the oaken beam; but at length the whole mass was in flames, blazed up rapidly and high for a considerable time, and then by degrees subsided. Sir Edward's patience could endure no longer; again and again he assured Tarleton that the beam was burnt in two—that all longer delay was absurd. He commanded him to set him free; he asked him how he dared let him remain there starving to death? What right he had to make him die of hunger? and threatened him with all manner of punishments for doing so.

Tarleton sternly commanded him to be still. "Be silent," he cried; "pestering fool! or by Heaven! if I have the means to save you, I will not use them."

His usual caution had now returned; and he was resolved by no premature attempt to lessen his chance of escape. In spite of all the threats, all the entreaties of his companion, he would make no effort until all active burning appeared to have ceased, and then, and not till then, he strained the chain. It yielded readily to the pull; and the heavy beam moved from its position some feet, until it was stopped by the fragment of rock, beyond which all Tarleton's efforts were ineffectual to stir it. He feared that he had been premature; and Forrester sinking from certain hope to the abyss of despair, groaned and sobbed like a child. Tarleton changed his position, and placed himself where the bending of the chain through the rough iron ring would least impede his efforts, and then again exerted his utmost strength. The still smouldering mass of timber appeared to him to give way: he made

another effort, and he felt assured that it would break.

He paused and looked at his companion, who lay groaning in all the agony of suspense and despair. He smiled, and could have found it in his heart to have lengthened his own captivity that he might prolong the misery of his fellow-prisoner. He deemed him not worth the sacrifice; and again exerting himself the beam broke asunder, and the jingling links of the chain rattled over the rough floor of the cave.

“Heavenly powers be praised!” cried Forrester; “my dear, dear Tarleton, what an escape! For mercy’s sake make haste, and cut these cursed cords! I never shall have the use of my wrists again.”

Tarleton without replying to him approached the table, and with little difficulty grasped the knife.

“My dear Tarleton,” again exclaimed Forrester imploringly, “cut my horrid cords first and I will cut yours.”

Tarleton would not be beholden to him even

for that assistance, and after a few minutes of careful exertion he stood a free unbound man. He then approached his companion, and dark thoughts passed across his mind. Treacherous as he knew himself to have been, he was still as indignant at Sir Edward's base and cowardly desertion of him in the hour of their mutual danger as if his own conduct had been truth itself. He was galled and nettled to the quick by finding that he had failed in his attempt to win his regard, worthless as he knew the regard of such a man to be. He was now absolutely in his power—in one instant he might revenge himself: the weapon was ready in his hand. The temptation was strong, but he resisted it. Why should he do that which must bring danger upon him; and must put an end to all the scheme of advantage to himself which he had already devised.

He severed the cords which bound him, and as he did so and raised him from the ground he said, "I rejoice, Forrester, that I have the power to do you this good office. It is all the revenge I shall take for your ungenerous at-

tempt to save yourself by my destruction : but I know your weakness, and feel pity for you rather than anger. I know my own weakness too ; for despite your treachery towards me, I still cling to you, still love you ; and am as anxious for your welfare and your interest as I have ever been."

" Treachery !" cried Forrester ; " what human being could think about treachery or friendship in such sufferings as mine ? I am sure, Tarleton, I have more to forgive than you have. But let us get out of this infernal hole at once. I am dying, dying with hunger. I shall never be able to crawl to any place, where I can get something to eat. Not a crust of bread have the demons left behind them," he exclaimed, walking about, and exploring various recesses with which he had become acquainted ; " not a drop of water, the cursed fiends ! Come, for God's sake, let us go !"

When after threading the narrow entrance to the cavern and removing the obstructing brush-wood, they at length reached the open

air, the blaze of a glorious autumn morning almost overpowered them, exhausted as they were by suffering and want of food: and it was not without difficulty that they accomplished their descent over the loose and broken fragments of stone to the soft grass which clothed the bottom of the defile.

No word of thankfulness to God for their unlooked-for escape passed the lips of either. Forrester knew not what religion meant; and Philip Tarleton's philosophy led him to despise all creeds, whilst his ill life made him anxious to persuade himself that all around him was the work of chance; or that if there were a God he was not one to be implored, or thanked, or feared.

For some time they walked down the defile in silence. By degrees the fresh morning air gave them new strength, and Sir Edward's spirits rose. He addressed Tarleton in his usual familiar tone, and although his chief subject of discussion was where and how soon they could obtain breakfast, yet he diverged to other topics; talked of an immediate journey to Ire-

land, and what schemes of amusement and dissipation he was resolved to execute.

For a long time his companion made no reply, gave no heed to him. At length he said drily, "All this will be vastly agreeable, no doubt; but you appear, Forrester, to have forgotten that you have an account to settle with Captain Walsingham."

"What account?" asked Forrester.

"For the blow with which he struck you to the ground."

"He did not strike me, Sir. We were struggling together, and I fell."

"For the ignominious stamping of his booted heel upon your chest as you lay prostrate on the rock."

"D——n!" cried Forrester; "you are bent on my destruction. I see it as clear as day."

"Indeed, I am not; and your saying so is harsh and unjust. If you can put up with the ignominy I care not."

"Who is to know it unless you blab it? as I firmly believe you did the cursed business at Bath."

“ Do you imagine that swaggering bully, Walsingham, will fail to report it? It is absurd to think so.”

“ Well, well,” cried Forrester, peevishly, “ why need we talk about the cursed fellow now, dying with hunger as I am?”

Tarleton gave a cold bitter smile; and they proceeded for some way in silence, when Forrester stopped abruptly saying, “ If, Mr. Tarleton, you are so careful about my honour, why do you not attend to your own? I’ll take my oath, I heard him call you a liar and a coward.”

“ You are quite right, Forrester; and be assured I have not forgotten it; nor do I intend to pass it over. He shall answer,” continued Tarleton, speaking through his set teeth; “ aye, strictly answer my appeal to him, after he has answered yours. For me to challenge him the first, would, under the circumstances, be absurd; and if you fall,” he added with a malicious smile, “ you will have the comfort of knowing that I will revenge you.”

Little more was said until they reached the

parlour of the rustic inn which Clara and Lionel had occupied. Forrester's courage augmented considerably after a good breakfast. He addressed Tarleton in his usual tone of regard; talked of Newmarket; of the cursed scrape they had just got out of, which was a devilish spirited thing after all; swore that he had been a fool to control his passion for such an enchanting bewitching girl when she was in his power; and hinted that if it was to be done again he would be less stupidly forbearing.

Tarleton listened with patience to all this. Even philosopher as he was, relief from gnawing hunger had its effect upon him. He no longer gave vent to any sarcasms against his patron: but whilst he listened to him, and assented to all he uttered, he revolved in his mind his future schemes against his life and fortune.

Sir Edward Forrester shunned returning to Bath or London; he talked of Ireland or Harrowgate. The distance displeased Tarleton; and at last they arranged to proceed to Cheltenham. There his treacherous friend acted

over again, and again successfully, the same series of deceptions which he had practised in London. He soon contrived that all which had passed between Forrester and Walsingham should be publicly known, the disclosure of course being laid at Walsingham's door; and the hot-headed set who formed their circle, assumed a tone which convinced Sir Edward that a meeting was inevitable. Nervous as this conviction made him, he adopted the alternative with less unwillingness than he would otherwise have done, from Tarleton's having dropt a hint, that his adversary would never take the life of a near relation of his mistress; and that consequently the meeting would be without real danger. This hint was treasured up and relied upon by the timid Baronet, and on the evening of the eighth day after they had left the cave, they again found themselves in the neighbourhood of East Leighton.

And what were the plans, what the intentions and hopes of the once high-minded Philip Tarleton? The blood tinged his pale cheek when he asked himself the question; and

whilst he took with systematic skill all the preliminary steps, he shuddered with horror at his own degradation.

He hated Forrester, because from his failure his own ulterior hopes of possessing Clara were blighted—he hated him for the subjection which his poverty compelled him to endure—he vindictively hated him for every rude and insulting word which he addressed to him, every one of which was treasured up and recorded in his memory ; and, oh degraded state of a noble and superior mind ! he had now resolved to revenge himself on his friend and patron, by bringing him to a violent death ; and, by whatever tissue of fraud, whatever train of villainy might be needful, to obtain affluence and independence out of his fortune.

CHAPTER III.

THERE remained an interval of three days before the painful hour at which young Walsingham must bid adieu to Rylands, three days before the still more painful moment at which he must bid adieu to Clara Forrester.

The party at the Castle had just assembled round the breakfast-table, when a note was brought to him. It contained only a few words, requesting that he would grant the bearer a private interview. Lionel, who had long expected a communication from Sir Edward Forrester, had no doubt as to the nature of the visit; and muttering some careless observations as to the detestability of cold coffee, rose from the table and proceeded to the room where the stranger awaited him.

The bearer of the note was Philip Tarleton :

but Lionel did not recognize him. They had never met except in the gloomy light of the Cheddar Cave, and the dress he at present wore, although there was no absolute attempt at disguise, a good deal concealed his features.

Walsingham's reception of the stranger, who stood with his arms folded within his cloak, was courteous and frank : he motioned him to a chair, and requested to know whom he had the honour of addressing. The deep tone of Tarleton's voice, even in the few words which declined the proffered civility, at once apprized him who his visitor was ; and, as he believed him to be a man whom no principle of honour would deter from an act of violence, Lionel with his usual promptitude of decision, was at once on the alert. Smiling as he muttered to himself, " We will have no surprises here," he stepped up much closer to his visitor than his sense of politeness would otherwise have suffered him to have done. The motive of the action flashed on Tarleton's mind, and a blush of shame and anger tinged his sallow

cheek, as he said in a composed but haughty tone :—

“ Captain Walsingham need have no fears for his personal safety, unless his nerves are unable to support the announcement that I am the bearer of a hostile message. Suspicions of any other danger are as injurious to me, as they are little complimentary to his own acuteness of perception.”

Lionel smarted under the rebuke ; he knew that a man more morally debased, more remote from virtue, than the one who addressed him did not exist ; but there was a dignity and gentlemanly composure in Tarleton’s deportment which constrained him to a courtesy of manner towards him, which he almost felt ashamed to bestow. Without replying to the taunt conveyed in Tarleton’s words, he merely said, “ I am ready, Sir, to receive your communication.”

“ I wait upon you, Captain Walsingham, on the part of my friend, Sir Edward Forrester. It is needless for me to repeat his grounds of complaint against you. He demands from

you the only reparation which his wounded honour can receive at your hands."

"His wounded honour!" exclaimed Lionel contemptuously. "The infamy of Sir Edward Forrester's conduct ought to exclude him from receiving—yes even from demanding the satisfaction which he seeks: the ignominy of his conduct," continued Walsingham, whose blood began to mount, "and the still deeper infamy of your's, Sir, ought, if I acted as I should do, to prevent my acceding to his request, or debasing myself by holding any communication with such a messenger."

Tarleton bore this insulting language unmoved, in appearance at least, and replied in a calm tone: "Is that your answer, Captain Walsingham?"

"It ought to be my answer, Sir, and I blush at my own feebleness of character that it is not. I consent to meet your friend."

"At what place, and at what hour? the sooner these things are got through the better."

Walsingham paced the room once or twice in silence, at length he said: "Mr. Tarleton,

my departure from this place is fixed for next Tuesday. I proceed from hence to Wells, and had intended to be there by noon. I will be there two hours earlier."

"An affair of this nature, Captain Walsingham, should not be postponed for three days. If you have resolved to make reparation to Sir Edward Forrester for the insults you have shewn him—and such, indeed, was your promise at the time—as a man of honour, you are bound not to delay an hour giving him that satisfaction."

"I am not aware, Sir, that a man incurs any risk to his honour who acts deliberately in an affair of this nature. However, my resolution is fixed: my arrangements require this delay."

"Do you consider," urged Tarleton, "the risk of interruption from so unusual, so unheard of a delay?"

"Mr. Tarleton, in affairs of this sort, when the parties are really in earnest and resolved to meet, no impediments can prevent their doing so. If difficulties are thrown in their

way in one place they can be got over in another. A thousand duels have been put aside by multiplied conferences and interminable letters and replies : but not one of them would have failed to take place had the parties been really desirous of meeting, as I presume your friend is."

Tarleton was greatly annoyed at this postponement. He knew how difficult he had found it to bring Forrester to his present determination ; and he almost despaired of keeping up his courage at so unnatural an elevation for three long days. He again remonstrated, and accused Walsingham of trifling with the feelings of his opponent.

"Excuse me, Sir," said Lionel ; "but the eagerness which you show on this point is but little flattering to your principal. Having acceded to his request, I hold myself pledged to meet him in England, or out of England, wherever and whenever the opportunity is afforded us. His philosophy has enabled him to endure the insult he complains of unresented for several days ; and my convenience

requires that he should do so for a further period. Your dread of delay implies your fear that Sir Edward Forrester will be glad of an opportunity to escape me, your fear—for I know his character perfectly—that he will contrive to slip out of your hands, and evade the meeting. If such be his wish, I have no desire to hurry him. I should for many reasons be heartily glad so to get rid of the business.”

“ You are too proud, Sir,” said Tarleton with dignity ; “ too confident in your own established character as a man of courage. The decision, however, rests with you ; and with you will also rest the obloquy, should this strange and unnecessary delay prevent the meeting.”

Lionel smiled at the threat. He received Tarleton’s address, and gave him that of a friend of high military rank at Wells, to whom he said he would immediately write, and then awaited the termination of the conference. But Tarleton still lingered. After a pause he said, “ Filling the office I at present do, I feel unwilling to advert to my own position with

regard to you, Captain Walsingham. There is an indelicacy in doing so : but I cannot end this interview without reminding you that there is also an account between you and myself which must be strictly settled. You dared to apply to me terms which I endure from no man breathing. The insults offered to my friend are deeper still, and I therefore postpone unwillingly my own claim to his : but you and I, Sir, must meet."

Walsingham knit his brow, and replied in a sterner voice than he had yet assumed :—" I know not, Sir, whether I have sufficiently considered my own honour in the concession I have now made to Sir Edward Forrester ; but I have much stronger doubts as to the possibility of my meeting you, Mr. Tarleton. It is painful to me to say this to a man whose bearing and language are those of a gentleman ; but the debased office which you took upon yourself in your friend's atrocious conduct excludes you from the pale of gentlemen. Yes, I must repeat it ; it would be utterly disgraceful to accept the challenge of the vile subtle

pander to a man, whose only excuse for his villainy is to be found in his stultified imbecility of character.”

The convulsive working of Tarleton's features spoke what he felt; still he controlled himself; and replied in a haughty and deliberate tone:—“You are too superficial a judge, too rash a speaker, Sir. I undertake to prove myself clear from any shade of dishonour, even the slightest, in the late transactions. That device shall not avail you. Next, I suppose, I shall be told that my poverty or my want of ancestry as noble as your own, is to protect you. You disgrace yourself, Sir, by such a subterfuge: it is unworthy of an honourable or a courageous man.”

“You mistake me wilfully, Sir,” said Lionel, with increasing warmth. “The poorest peasant, if he be an honest man, and think I have injured him, has a right to every atonement I can make him. I have never hinted at the objections you refer to; I have never thought of them; and you bring them forward now only to shake my resolution, but I am not to

be so played upon. As long as you stand disgraced and degraded by your late conduct, so long I positively refuse to meet you. It is painful to me to use such terms, but my honour demands it. Be pleased, Sir, to understand me clearly, I scorn and hate the character of a duellist ; but as I cannot refuse Sir Edward Forrester's demand, I will also accede to your's, provided—provided," he repeated, with marked emphasis, "you are able, as you assert you are, to clear yourself from the strong suspicions which now hang over you. And to prevent all useless altercation, you are to understand, Sir, that your exculpation must be as complete, as undeniable, as the misconduct which you are charged with is gross and degrading."

Tarleton trembled with passion ; but other feelings oppressed him more deeply still. Confident as he was of his own powers, he felt himself subdued and quelled by the rebuke of a mere youth, whose open conduct and spotless honour enabled him thus to triumph over him. He paused before he replied ; and

his voice trembled as he said:—"Captain Walsingham, my honour is as dear to me as your's is to you. In the transactions to which you allude, I have been influenced only by the purest friendship. My truth in saying this, I undertake to prove. But have a care, Sir, give not me and the world grounds to believe, that to screen yourself from danger you strive to throw obloquy on a man, whose honour is as unsullied as your own: the trick is as unworthy as it is stale and profitless."

Lionel coloured; and with no attempt to conceal the scorn he felt, replied:—"It is useless to continue this jangling dialogue. I have explained my intentions towards you, I do not alter them. I have explained them plainly;" his lips curled with contempt as he added:—"and you, Sir, understand me perfectly. I am not aware of any advantage which can result from continuing this conference."

Tarleton replied: "Yes, Sir, I do understand you perfectly, more perfectly, perhaps, than you intend me to do; but I am not to be so foiled or circumvented. However, you have said rightly that a man of courage need not

fear delay. On the part of my friend Sir Edward Forrester, we understand each other."

"Perfectly," said Lionel, and with a cold bow on either part, the interview concluded.

"What babies we all are," thought Lionel, as he returned to the breakfast room; "if that rascal had been less gentlemanly in his manner, less musical and precise in that deep-toned voice of his, had he but squinted, or stuttered, or twisted his hands and legs about, what a much prettier lecture I could have read him; but a man who stands there acting Roman Emperor, and as motionless as a statue, confound him, it is quite out of the question to abuse him with any spirit!"

On re-entering the breakfast room he at once perceived by the anxious expression of his father's countenance that he guessed the nature of the visit. The Earl was ill at ease and fidgety, and awaited with impatience the termination of the repast. As soon as they were alone, he said, "Lionel, who was your visitor?"

"A gentleman on business," was the laconic reply.

"Was it any one from that Forrester?"

Walsingham paused. "I insist upon knowing, Sir, who was the person."

"Mr. Philip Tarleton, my Lord, with a message from Sir Edward Forrester."

"Which of course you refused, degraded ruffian as he is."

"Which I accepted, my Lord."

"Lionel, you shall not meet him; you shall not disgrace yourself and your family by going out with such a miscreant. Your courage is established; and he has put himself out of the pale of honourable society."

Young Walsingham smiled, and shook his head. "My dear kind father, it will not do: the affair can have no other termination. I knew that your opinion must be like mine, and that it would be useless to attempt to evade your question. I grieve to add to your annoyances at present, and it is most painful to me to go out with a near relation of Clara's; but there is no help for it. This is perfectly evident."

"It is not evident, Sir, and I shall prevent the meeting."

"Forgive me, my dear father, but indeed you

must do no such thing ; why need I say you must not,—you cannot do it, nor would you, I am certain, if you could. Look back to the time when you were what I am now ; and I shall be willing to pursue whatever you shall candidly tell me would have been your own course then.”

“ Provoking !” cried the Earl petulantly : “ When do you meet him, intemperate block-head as you are ?”

“ On that point I am determined to consult my own convenience, and the comfort of us all.”

“ Comfort !” groaned the Earl.

“ Sir Edward Forrester,” continued Lionel, “ pressed for an immediate meeting, but I refused an earlier time than the morning of my departure, and was accordingly taunted by his friend with wishing that through the delay the meeting might be prevented. After this how would my character stand were any steps of the kind taken ? Come, come, my dear father, a thousand of these stupid things take place without any harm being done. You have no cause of alarm.”

“And that scoundrel Tarleton has had the audacity to show his face here,—insolent vagabond !”

Lionel took his father's hand. “We quite understand each other in this business.”

“I understand, Sir, that I have a hot-headed senseless son, who is resolved to break my heart. Yes, yes,” he continued peevishly, seeing that Lionel required a more direct answer, “you must have your own way in this and in every thing else.”

“And my dear father, no mention must be made of this to Hardinge or to any one.”

“Of course not. Do you suppose I don't know that if the thing must be done it is no use to attempt stopping it. I am dying with pain,” continued the Earl, upon whom mental anxiety was sure to bring back his enemy the gout, which was always hovering near him. “There! go, and send Emily to me, and order a man to fetch Wilkinson. I wish ——,” but he checked the gloomy and discontented words which were upon his lips, and contenting himself with a peevish groan or two, closed his eyes and leant back in his chair.

Poor Lionel's troubles were coming thick upon him. It was quite evident that the approaching duel was bringing on the gout a full month earlier than it ought to have shown itself, according to the order of nature and Dr. Wilkinson. This greatly vexed and distressed him on his father's account, and somewhat also on his own, as he knew from old experience that the gout would not at all tend to lessen the gloom and despondency which already hung over Rylands. He consoled himself, as people generally do, by the argument that he was perfectly blameless in the whole affair ; and after writing a letter to his friend Colonel Fortescue, explaining the need he had of his assistance, and requesting a meeting that evening at five o'clock, at a point midway between East Leighton and Wells, he stole down to the Manor-house, determined to have a long delightful morning with Clara, and resolute that it should not be embittered by the reflection of how soon such happiness must end.

The days wore on. To Clara they were days of anxiety ; yet how rapidly did they fly ! With the strength of mind which marked her

character she had restrained herself from uttering a single word of complaint or remonstrance. She knew that Lionel's determination was fixed, and although sad and broken-hearted, she resolved not to annoy him by any useless regrets.

CHAPTER IV.

PROFESSOR BUCKLAND asserts, and indeed proves very satisfactorily, in his *Bridgewater Treatise*, that the laws, however harsh they may at first appear, which regulate the social system of the marine tribes are as beneficent as they are wise ; and that the sum total of fish-happiness is increased ten-fold by their swallowing each other up in the full bloom of youth and plumpness. By this arrangement not only the uneaten fishes have more tender and agreeable dinners, but those which are dined upon escape all the misery of old age and infirmity. In like manner we think that if during the war all leave-taking had been prohibited by Act of Parliament, under heavy penalties, to be trebled in the case of lovers, the sum total of human happiness would have been greatly increased ; although, to a superficial observer,

the enactment might have appeared harsh and tyrannical. At all events our readers would have been spared the labour of struggling through the long series of heart-rending separations which we are now compelled to narrate.

On the morning previous to his departure, Lionel, although he begrudged every moment that was spent apart from his fair mistress, was obliged to sacrifice some small portion of his time to leave-taking ; but only at three houses did the process extend further than leaving his card. One of these exceptions was the Vicarage, the inmates of which he looked up to with reverence and affection ; and Mrs. Mackenzie's humble cottage was another. He greatly esteemed Jane Mackenzie for her own good qualities ; but she was too dear to his Clara not to be dear to him also ; and during the whole progress of his attachment she had been the confidante of all his hopes and fears.

The Bower of the Eglantine was the third exception. Its fair inmate was so great a favourite, that he could not bring himself to leave Rylands without a parting interview. His ap-

pearance at the Bower threw our heroine into a state of extreme excitement. She had reasoned herself into a settled conviction as to the exact similarity of her woes to those of Clara.

“What would it differ to me,” she exclaimed in one of those long soliloquies in which she frequently indulged, and which imperfectly heard by Phœbe, made the poor girl, as she was accustomed to confess to Mr. Battersby, ‘shake in her shoes,’—“what would it differ to me whether my Charles, obdurate and unmelting, fell a victim to that diabolical French Thingummy, or to a base little woman’s designing dinners? Could his fate be more miserable? Could my hopeless woes be more excruciating? No! no! no!”

She was in the full indulgence of these sad reflections when Lionel entered the little parlour, which, to her great delight, he always called the “*Temple of the Twelve!*” She was all kindness, regrets, and tears; mourned the pangs which her darling Clara would endure, and the misery of ill-requited love, in terms so ardent, that nothing but the accordant sorrows

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of her own heart could have prompted the expressions, and implored Lionel “ not to let those nasty Frenchmen kill him and the dear girl with one simultaneous blow—and simultaneous it must be, my dear young friend, if you but recognised the female heart. But it is the predilection of your fatal sex, my dear Mr. What-d’ye-call-’em, to obtain our soft affections, and then give them to all the winds of heaven !—But—Well, no matter ; only my dear young friend be prudent. It will break her heart if you kill yourself, as I know you are determined to do : and think, oh think ! of your mental pang, when you lie extended a lifeless corse amidst the din of arms !”

“ My dear Miss Chamberlayne, be assured I go with no such tragic intentions. I am quite resolved to take especial care of myself for her sake, noble-minded girl, as well as for many others.”

“ For mine ! oh let me say for mine !—for why should modesty congeal my tongue ?—For all our sakes, be prudent ! Only remember ——”

Lionel had already, in the course of the last two days submitted to about a dozen sermons on the same text, and he began somewhat to dread their repetition. With good generalship he determined to carry the war into the enemy's country.

“Prudent, my dear Miss Chamberlayne,” he exclaimed, “I will be the concentration of prudence,—its very concentrated essence. But what, oh what are the weak clumsy blows which Mars bestows upon his votaries, compared to the deadly shafts of the blind, the insidious Boy?” Miss Chamberlayne already began to simper. “What,” he continued, waving his arm, “what are all the parks of artillery in Europe compared to one quiver full of Cyprian steel? Can the fair Miss Chamberlayne deny that at this very moment Venus with the graceful extremities of her soft and roseate feet, has converted some of the best meadow land in the parish into a field of deadly conflict?”

Miss Chamberlayne, although uncertain whether the detailed description of the god-

dess's extremities did not border on the indelicate, could not bring herself to chide the handsome young soldier at such a time, and smiled graciously at the gay tone of his mock-heroic address ; but she qualified the smile with one or two profound sighs.

“ Oh, Mr. Thingumbob,” she exclaimed, lost in the contemplation of her own misfortunes, “ oh, you are always quizzing me ; but you little know how true is what you say ! Yes, the wounds of friendship are ten thousand times more deadly than the warrior's blade. Base, selfish, impudent, little creature ! Yes, I had rather expose,” she continued, striking her graceful form with tragic energy, “ I had rather expose this bosom to a thousand Frenchmen,—their swords and guns I mean,—than to the mental daggers of one insidious friend. But I understand you, my dear young friend ; you have no time for my calamities ; and if you had my modesty would not sanction the display. The base, selfish, impudent, fat, little creature ! God bless you, and preserve you, my dear Mr. Lionel. Think of your poor father, and

the dear girl at the Manor-house, and don't let those detestable French monsters kill you. I shall never live to see you return. I feel I am sinking fast."

"No, no, my dear Miss Chamberlayne, it is all stuff and nonsense. Mark my prophetic words, my parting augury!" He waved his arm, and, in a theatrical tone, exclaimed, "I see,—yes, I see Mrs. Dobson a mere globe of fat, rolling away into the distant vallies in all the agonies of disappointed love. I see, I also see, the crown of connubial bliss hovering over the brow of beauty and of virtue, soon to descend upon it for countless ages of felicity!"

"For shame, Mr. Lionel; how dare you talk to me in this manner?" cried the spinster, pleased beyond expression, "I won't listen to another word.—But can't you stay a little longer?"

"Impossible! I have a thousand places to go to. One parting salute, my dear Miss Chamberlayne, 'for auld lang syne.'"

"Immeasurably improper, Mr. Lionel! and

impossible," she added, leaning forward her fair and very handsome cheek.

"Dear, sweet, handsome, kind-hearted, young creature!" she exclaimed, as she watched him urging his horse to the gallop, "yes, dear, fascinating, young soothsayer, yes, I hail, I accept the parting, the prophetic augury. 'A globe of fat!'—the dear, witty, sensible, young angel!"

Lionel's last evening was spent at the Manor-house; and after bidding adieu to all the party, except his fair mistress who had consented to bestow one last dear hour upon him on the morrow, he knocked at the old housekeeper's door with some degree of terror as to the new edition of advice and censure which he should receive at her hands. But she appeared at first to be in league with her young mistress; for, like her, not a single word of remonstrance escaped her lips. There was energy and affection in the tone in which, as he shook her massive hand, she prayed God to bless and protect him; and her thanks were warm and abundant, when he explained to her what his father

and himself were anxious to do for her nephew ; but not one word did she utter about Clara,—not one hope did she express for their future happiness, and there was gloom and despondency in her contracted brow and serious eye. Lionel was piqued at this ; for, although he had been lectured quite as much as he thought was necessary, still he had so high an opinion of the old woman's judgment and clearness of intellect that he felt her silence to be equivalent to severe censure.

“ Hannah,” he said, “ remember I leave Miss Clara to your care. I have told Mr. Hardinge so. We all know that you are the wisest and most prudent person in the world, and I look entirely to you to keep her happy and safe.”

The praise did not thaw the old woman. “ Poor lamb !” she said, “ what can I do for her, but watch her and pity her ; I cannot bring the rose back into her poor pale cheek.”

“ Miss Clara is not ill, Hannah,” said Lionel ; “ why do you say that ?—why do you speak so despondingly ?”

“ You love Miss Clara,” said Hannah

gravely ; “ you love her dearly,—how could you help it?—but you don’t know how to read her heart as I do. I creep, like an old fool as I am, into her room of a morning, and watch her sweet face as she sleeps. I did so when she first came,—I do so now. Oh ! but what a change there is ! She used to look like an angel come down from heaven, who did not know what care or unhappiness could be. Now,—why she looks more beautiful than ever, but I cannot cast my eyes upon her without crying like the rain ; pale, and restless, and uneasy, pretty lamb !—her mind does not sleep, if her body does. ’Tis a sad change, Sir !”

“ Come, come, my dear Hannah, no melancholy forebodings. I am quite resolved to come back safe and well ; yes, and very soon too. It breaks my heart to cause anxiety for a single hour to such a creature as Clara Forrester ; but I dare not, I cannot act otherwise than I do,—it is impossible. She feels this ; I know she does, and every body must. Good Heavens ! can it be imagined for an instant that if I thought of my own happiness I should leave her for an hour ?”

“There is no use, Sir, in talking about what’s fixed and settled. She never complains, and why should I? I never intended to have opened my lips about it. What would I care,” continued Hannah, “if she was one of the namby-pamby misses,—silly young things,—sighing and dying, who can put their hearts to rights with a few sobbing tears and poutings, and not a pin the worse for it; but she was made to be as gay as a bird; her soul was all meant for happiness and joy. Can she feel such love as she does for you, and not wither and fade away, and break all our hearts to see it? I would not,” cried the old woman, yielding to the energy of her feelings, “I would not risk the life of such a girl as that for all the commissions the King ever flourished his name upon! But hey dear, why do I vex you, Sir, with all my foolish speeches? I know I can do no good, and I never intended to have let my silly old tongue utter a single word. The thing can’t be helped now; we all know that.”

Lionel was grieved, vexed, and angry. He made no reply, but cordially shaking the old

woman by the hand they separated with the ordinary words of friendly parting.

Very few people were less in the habit of giving way to bad temper than Lionel ; but he was now as completely out of humour as any young man need wish to be. It was with difficulty that he could restrain himself from the gratification of banging together the unoffending paddock gates with all his strength ; and it would have done him good to have snatched off his hat and hurled it against the largest elm tree within his reach.

“ I wish,” he exclaimed, “ with all my soul, that Buonaparte and all his cursed Marshals were at the bottom of the Red Sea ! A pretty succession of scenes I am going through. Yes, and these very self-same people,—that stern old fire-brand the first of all,—if I had agreed to stay at home, and stamp myself a coward for life, would have been just as grave, and as gloomy, and as ready to find fault : but it is a mighty easy thing to give advice, and to be virtuous, and prudent at other people’s expence. I care not one farthing for them all. I am

right,—I know I am, and Clara thinks so too.”

A rapid step, and the whistling Malbrouk half a dozen times restored him to his usual equanimity. The tune was changed again and again: snatches of hunting songs and war songs came next in succession: and when he reached the Castle, he was almost unconsciously warbling with great energy a very love-sick ditty, in which Clara's name was introduced in defiance of all rhyme and measure.

His conflicts and trials recommenced early the next morning at the bed-side of his sick father: his sisters, as they clung round him, were surprised and alarmed, in the midst of their own sorrows, at the vehemence of the grief and agitation which their father evinced, and of which the more immediate cause was unknown to them. Lionel shortened the painful scene as much as possible; and by the time he reached the great hall, where all the train of servants were assembled to bid him farewell, had resumed his usual lively air, and gaily replied to their good

wishes. It was, however, a relief to him when he found himself traversing alone the noble park in the early splendour of an autumn morning.

The dew was heavy on the grass and on the tall and luxuriant fern, and sparkled like millions of diamonds. Herds of stately deer were proceeding at a slow pace in long trains from one feeding-place to another, stopping, collecting themselves into knots, gazing round them, and then darting forward at a rapid pace as some object of alarm prompted them again;—then again resuming their leisurely progress, and appearing to entrust to their stately and deliberate leader the safety of all the herd.

It was a lovely hour and a lovely scene; but young Walsingham's habits as a sportsman had rendered it so familiar to him, that it was seldom noticed. But now he gazed upon it with more interest than he had ever done before; and the thought crossed his mind, whether he should ever again behold it. There was no despondency, no timidity in the feeling which occupied his mind; but there was more of seriousness and depth of feeling than was usual

with him. Soon, however, his rapid step removed him from the scene; and nothing remained on his mind but the thoughts of his approaching interview.

Lionel, as is very usual with youthful lovers, was considerably before the appointed time; but his lovely mistress, who had been watching for his arrival, was soon by his side.

He looked at her pale face: and the old housekeeper's predictions came with painful force upon his mind. "My dearest, dearest love," he said, "my heart bleeds to see that you are unhappy and depressed. For heaven's sake, my dearest Clara, for mine, for the sake of all who love you, exert yourself to throw aside useless regrets, as useless as they will be injurious to your dear health. A few, a very few short months, and I will return to you. I will quit the army without a sigh, without regret, and comfort and happiness shall be our's, unalloyed by any loss of honour, any slur upon my reputation."

When a firm spirit gives way, the breaking

down is far more complete than with slighter minds. It was so with the high-spirited, the strong-minded Clara Forrester. The tears fell rapidly down her pale cheek ; she dared not trust her voice, she had no power to speak. Lionel endeavoured, by assuming a gayer tone, to dispel her sorrow : he spoke of the slightness of the danger to which he would be exposed, of his determination to be every thing that was most prudent and cautious ; then, ill able to maintain this tone, with a depth and energy of passion repeated again and again his ardent professions of unalterable, unbounded love. Tears were the only answer. He was pained and oppressed by her silence ; and after a struggle with himself exclaimed :—

“ Clara, the very essence of your character is generosity and nobleness ! Will you, will you render this last hour less painful to me by telling me that you consent to my leaving England ? You have never uttered a word to oppose it, dear generous angel !—but will you now lessen the agony of the bitterest hour I have ever known, by letting me hear from your own

dear lips that you consent to my departure—that—that you approve it?”

The agitated girl exerted herself to regain her composure, and Lionel felt that the arm which hung on his trembled violently. After a pause, and in a voice which showed how much she feared that her feelings would master her resolution, she said,

“ Why press me thus, Lionel ? Why ask me to set the seal to my own misery ? Why take from me the one single consolation of thinking that no vacillation, no hesitation of mine, has led to the event which we all anticipate ? Ought I to do it ?—can I do it ? Is it just, is it generous in you to ask it ? ”

She ceased to speak ; and Walsingham, pained to the heart, and undecided what reply to make, was for a time silent. When in faltering accents he again addressed her, she checked him by a gentle pressure of the arm ; and after an interval, painful alike to them both, she said,—her voice as she proceeded becoming more and more firm, her eye flashing with its accustomed lustre, and the colour

mounting into her cheek,—“ Yes, my dear, my noble Walsingham, I do consent; I do approve of your decision. What right have I to say otherwise, whilst I know that were I you I should act as you are doing? Go, Walsingham, and may all good angels watch over and protect you.” She paused, and then added in a tone which indicated the conflict within her bosom. “ But remember, indeed, indeed you should, how much of happiness, how much of misery, depends on you! How wide, how complete, the desolation which your loss would cause!”

Lionel’s heart swelled in his bosom. He felt that he was vanquished in generosity and strength of mind by the trembling disconsolate girl beside him. Why could he not make as great a sacrifice for her as she had made for him? For a moment he vacillated, but it was only for a moment. To every brave man his honour is dearer than his life; to Walsingham, enthusiastic as he was, and the very soul of honour, not only was it ten thousand times dearer than life, but mastered even his love, ardent and sincere as that love was.

In hurried accents, and as if fearful to trust his own resolution, he poured out his praises and his thanks ; spoke with confidence of his quick return ; and strove hard, but with little success, to close their interview with some approach to tranquillity and cheerfulness. The harsh sound of the village clock warned Lionel that the hour of his departure had arrived. He led the lovely girl to the door of the Manor-house—gave and received in broken accents a last farewell—imprinted one fond kiss on her pale cheek—and tore himself away.

CHAPTER V.

WALSINGHAM had not misinterpreted Tarleton's fears, as to the ill effects of delay; nor over-estimated the difficulties he would have to encounter, in sustaining the courage of the feeble-minded Sir Edward Forrester. The three days which were to intervene before the meeting, were indeed, to Tarleton, days of labour and anxiety; and he was compelled to resort to every variety of treatment, to keep his pupil in anything like fighting trim. To the poor Baronet himself, the hours of suspense were insupportable. The more his mind dwelt on the alarming future, the more his nerves gave way; he grew pale and thin; looked ten years older than he had done a month before; and appeared every moment, as if he was upon the point of breaking down altogether. His relationship to the mistress of his dreaded antagonist was the one only ray

of hope which cheered him; and Tarleton took care that this should play about his fancy in a thousand different aspects. But the consolation was sadly small; and Caroline Forrester's augury, that the affair would end fatally to him, was never absent from his mind. His nights were worse than his days; his hours of sleep, when he could sleep, worse than his waking hours: they were filled with endless rehearsals of the approaching combat, all varying in their circumstances, but all alike filled with calamities to himself; his pistol missed fire—the ball rolled out upon the ground—the stock crumbled in his hand like dust—the barrel was all touch-hole—he was shot through the heart before he could raise his weapon, which he discovered too late had been tied down to his side—he tried to run away, but his feet would constantly come down on the self-same spot, without advancing one inch, whilst his adversary's pistol still continued to be pointed at his head.

Philip Tarleton, from his knowledge of Walsingham's impetuous temper, and the timidity of Forrester, which, more than any

thing else, would augment his danger, was confident in his hopes, that one of the two would fall; he little cared which, so equal was his hatred of them both. But there was one point upon which he was most anxious: it was, to impress upon Sir Edward Forrester, the expediency of arranging his affairs.

All the Baronet's landed property was entailed: but there was a certain thirty or forty thousand pounds in the funds, upon which his companion had, of late, cast a greedy eye. It was delicate and dangerous ground to tread upon; the state of Sir Edward's mind in no degree disposing him to contemplate will-making with complacency.

Sir Edward Forrester had, in common with many nervous people, a vague impression, that the executing of a will, was equivalent to a declaration of immediate dissolution; and, moreover, from certain misgivings, which he neither completely understood, nor attempted to analyze, he much preferred, at the present moment, that his friend should owe his worldly prosperity to his life rather than to his death.

On this occasion, Tarleton did not select

the dark gloomy hour of night for practising on his imbecile patron : he chose the time immediately after dinner ; the most cheerful hour of the twenty-four, when the mind is most buoyant, when the good temper of the kind-hearted is most abundant, and the ill-humour of the crabbed somewhat relaxes.

“ Forrester,” said Tarleton in a tone half sportive, half serious ; “ I’ll bet fifty guineas, that the question I am going to ask, will startle you.”—Sir Edward started in anticipation, and looked up enquiringly,—“ Have you made your will ?”

It was with a shudder, rather than a start, that the Baronet answered, “ No, Sir, I have not ;” and still shuddering as he spoke, he added ; “ Why should I ?”

“ For several reasons. Among the rest, because every man of consequence should do it ; and because, if only as a matter of form, every man does it before he goes out. It is part of the ceremonial,” he continued, smiling with a malignant gratification at the terror he was exciting, “ and is omitted only by belligerent hair-dressers and linen-drapers.”

“ I shall not make a will,” said Sir Edward doggedly.

“ In God’s name do not ! The risk you run to-morrow I consider nothing ; but a wise man should be prepared against every contingency however remote. Should Walsingham hit you, which I bet my existence he never does, nor attempts to do, you would not like, I conceive, that all your personal property should go to enrich persons who have treated you as Mrs. Forrester and her daughters have done.”

The cold dew stood over Forrester’s lip as he answered, “ What the devil do I care who gets it, if I must lose it ? ”

“ Men’s feelings differ on these matters,” said Tarleton. “ Were I you, I should not greatly like to think that my thousands should go to buy gewgaws and wedding-dresses, to make the woman I loved a more attractive prize to my rival.”—Forrester changed his attitude, and looked more gloomy and wretched than before. “ You have many friends who are attached to you ; should not their claims be considered ? Should not—for it is my nature to speak frankly—should not you show

that my disinterested friendship for you has not been thrown away?"

"No, Sir," cried Forrester fiercely, "no, Sir, I will not. It is you who have got me into this infernal scrape;—entirely you. You are bent on destroying me; and now you want to make me pay you for doing it."

"Insolent slanderer!" cried Tarleton with well-assumed anger. "But you are beside yourself—you know not what you say, and I am wrong to resent it. Ah, Forrester, there are few men who could bear all that I bear from you, and still esteem, still love you!"

"I never have made my will," said Forrester in a thoughtful tone; "and I don't see why I should now. But for God's sake, Tarleton, don't let us quarrel to-day! I have always intended to do something for you—I don't want any man I love to be dependent on me. I—I—Get me once out of this cursed affair, my dear fellow, and I will settle five hundred a-year upon you."

"And would it not be a pang to you, Forrester, if you fell to-morrow, to think that you left me—the truest friend man ever had, for

such I am, and such were you cool you would know me to be—in indigence, from a mere womanish dread of signing your name?”

“I shan’t do it to-day, if you were to ask me till midnight. It is not very usual, I believe, for people to press this sort of thing. And you, talking as you always are about your refinement and delicacy of feeling, it is monstrous odd how you can bring yourself to do it!”

Tarleton was foiled; but he could press the subject no further. “It matters not,” he exclaimed mentally, “I will find another road to independence.”

Many and lengthened have been the disquisitions on the subject of duels. The degree of sin in the parties who are the actors in them,—the degree of culpability in the legislature which does not prevent them,—whether the evil in civilized communities be a necessary or an unnecessary one,—all these points have been over and over again debated by the moralist, the statesman, and the divine. We will not attempt to grapple with the question; and will only remark that it must be one of no little

difficulty ; seeing that in the most enlightened and moral country in the world there is a very perceptible variation between the law and the practice : the law being, that any officer who sends or accepts a challenge shall be cashiered ; and the practice being, to kick him out of the service if he omits to do either.

But of all the objectors to the theory and practice of duelling, there never was one whose hatred of it was more intense than that of Sir Edward Forrester, as with a groan he clambered over the awkward stile which admitted him into the selected field. Walsingham and Colonel Fortescue were already there ; and also a military surgeon, whose *accidental* presence had been arranged according to the usual system. The pistols were loaded, and the distance stepped out in silence ; except a very few words of arrangement between the seconds ; and the two antagonists were desired to take their ground.

Forrester, whose cheek was deadly pale, hesitated ; and whispered to Tarleton through his shut teeth, as if afraid to trust his voice, “ Ask for an apology.”

“Totally useless!” replied his second.

“Sir, I order you,” cried Forrester with savage quickness.

“Colonel Fortescue,” said Tarleton, stepping up to him, “will Captain Walsingham prevent this affair proceeding further by apologizing to my friend?”

“No, Sir,” said Colonel Fortescue haughtily; “Captain Walsingham will apologize to Sir Edward Forrester nowhere; and least of all upon the ground.”

Tarleton reported this answer. “Ask Walsingham himself,” cried Forrester.

“I cannot,” he replied; “and it is perfectly useless. Walsingham himself told me, that once on the field the affair was entirely in the hands of his second, not in his own.”

Forrester groaned, and took his position. It appeared to him, as he gave a quick timid glance at his antagonist, that the distance between them was twelve inches, rather than twelve paces.

The signal to fire was given; and one shot only was heard. After a second or two, which

distinctly marked the interval, Lionel fired his pistol in the air.

“ Very handsome, by G—,” cried Forrester aloud, with a sudden elevation of spirits: “ perfectly satis—,” but he stopped in the middle of the word, struck by the strange expression on Tarleton’s countenance, who came quickly towards him.

“ Forrester,” he exclaimed, in a quick sharp tone, “ you have the villain at your mercy. I told you that his infatuated passion for the woman you love would never allow him to fire at you. It is not his generosity which secures you, but his coward fear of losing Clara Forrester. Punish the villain who dared to hurl you to the ground and stamp upon you with his heel. You may do it with perfect safety.” Forrester looked at him with an expression of indecision. “ You are disgraced in the eyes of the world for ever,” still more vehemently urged Tarleton, “ if the affair ends here;—disgraced for ever.”

The poor victim hesitated and trembled; but the look of decision on Tarleton’s stern brow

compelled him to submission. He assented by a nod, and groaned as he did so.

“Colonel Fortescue,” said Tarleton, advancing to him as he spoke, “the injuries which Sir Edward Forrester has received are such as to render it impossible for him to let the affair be thus concluded. The business must proceed, Sir.”

Colonel Fortescue looked sternly at Tarleton, and the blood mounted to his cheek. He bowed to him without a word of reply. The parties were again placed, and the signal given. This time Forrester ventured to look at his antagonist as he raised his pistol; but again he missed him; and again Lionel fired in the air, and then coolly turned away.

Tarleton stepped rapidly up to Forrester. “Was I not right?” he said; “the insolent fellow has come here not daring to aim at you; you have him safe—*safe*.”

A shade of colour for a moment returned to Sir Edward’s cheek; he breathed more freely, and exclaimed in an imperious tone—“I am not to be trifled with by any man breathing. Give me another pistol.”

“By heavens!” cried Colonel Fortescue, whose indignation betrayed him into sudden warmth, “I will not allow such degrading conduct. How dare you, Sir, permit your principal to act so basely?”

“Regulate your words more cautiously, Colonel Fortescue,” said Tarleton, in a haughty tone, “or”—but Lionel approached, and interrupted the discussion. Up to the present moment young Walsingham had shown a perfect command of temper, and that exact middle point between indifference and daring which marks the man of real courage; and if Colonel Fortescue had been a professed amateur of duels, which he was very far from being, he would, in the language of Chalk Farm, have felt proud of his man. But Lionel’s look was now changed: the dark spot was on his cheek; his brow was contracted, and his lips were pressed close together. Tarleton observed the change, it was indeed too marked to escape observation, and he augured well of the result.

“Fortescue,” said Walsingham, “give yourself no trouble in the matter. I have shown

as much forbearance as I think right. I shall now defend myself."

If the change in Lionel's countenance had been visible, that in poor Sir Edward's was still more apparent; his recent hopes of safety at once deserted him, and all his fears came back with double force. The muscles of his face were actually distorted by terror. He faltered out, "I am—I am—Tarleton, let me speak to you." He gazed at the countenances of those around him, and saw an expression of contempt on them all; but his alarm made him disregard it. "Tarleton," he said, "I—I—have no right, Sir, to demand any further satisfaction."

Tarleton grasped his arm. "You *must* go on, Sir, or hide your face for ever;"—his voice trembled with the conflicting and fiend-like passions which possessed him;—"you *must* go on, or become the ridicule, the laughing-stock of all the world. After what he has said, if you turn craven now, you stamp yourself a coward too base to be associated with. Forrester, you must go on." He turned from him, and addressed Colonel Fortescue. "My friend,

Sir, of course now requires that the affair should proceed."

Colonel Fortescue looked at him as he spoke with an indignant and searching glance, but made no reply; and the antagonists for the third time took their ground, Forrester, as his second led him forward, muttering convulsively between his shut teeth, "Fiend—murderer!"

Again they fired, and again Sir Edward missed; but Lionel, in whose hands a duelling pistol was a certain weapon, as it must be in the hands of every one whose nerves are unshaken, and who understands its use, wounded his antagonist in the thigh, as he aimed to do; and Forrester sunk to the ground.

"What is the wound?" he cried to the surgeon; "will it lame me?"

"No," was the cheering answer; "the bone is not injured; it is only a flesh wound."

Bandages were immediately applied; Lionel with a trembling hand eagerly assisted, as did the others; but Philip Tarleton's eyes were bent earnestly on Forrester's face, which changed rapidly.

“Water!” he cried; “I am dying with thirst.”

The surgeon started at the words, for the wound had bled but little. He looked at the wounded man’s face; and suspending his operations, felt his pulse: he changed colour as he again did so; and turning round to Tarleton, who was behind him, shook his head.

Forrester perceived the action. “Am I,” he cried, raising himself up with sudden violence, “Am I dying?—tell me.” He looked imploringly into the surgeon’s face, who, distressed and agitated, paused before he answered. Forrester seized Lionel’s two hands in his, and pressed them with convulsive violence. “Tell me, Walsingham, tell me the truth; I will believe *you*; am I dying? Oh, my God! my God!”

Lionel trembled violently. “Heaven forbid!” he exclaimed, and then in a low whisper appealed to the surgeon, “Can it be so?”

“Yes,” was the answer; “the wound bleeds internally; he will not survive ten minutes. The ball must have glanced upwards.”

Lionel turned deadly pale, but nerved his

courage to the duty which he felt he had to perform. "Forrester," he said, in a voice thrilling with emotion, "God forgive us both! Your moments are numbered. Throw them not away," he added, as the dying man, fixing his eyes on Tarleton, uttered imprecation on imprecation; "throw them not away, for God's sake! Oh, think of nothing but asking pardon of your God!"

Those, and those only, who have seen a strong and healthy man sink into death when, as in this case, a large artery has been divided, can imagine the fearful and rapid change which takes place: the bright eye sunk in the head, opaque and lustreless—the distended mouth—the short unequal panting—the limbs now motionless and dead, now for an instant violently convulsed—and, worst of all, most painful of all to those around, the exclamation of surprise and disbelief which the dying man utters to the last. It was a fearful scene.

For a moment or two after Lionel had addressed him, Forrester remained silent; and then again he seized Lionel's hand, fixed his glazed eye on Tarleton, and muttered, with a

rapidly decreasing voice, "That fiend! that fiend! Fool, madman, that I have been! Must I—must I die?"

A few inaudible words succeeded, then fainter and fainter struggles, and the scene was closed.

"So far so well," muttered Tarleton, calming, by a strong effort, the violent emotions which he felt.

Several persons had by this time assembled; evincing, as usual, great anxiety to see and hear, and great apathy as to securing the persons of those who had broken the law. The necessary instructions having been given to the surgeon, Lionel with a heavy heart quitted the ground, accompanied by Colonel Fortescue. Tarleton followed, and after they had proceeded some distance, he came up to them, and with a manner as stern and collected as if a few minutes before his nerves had not been shaken to the centre, addressed himself to Lionel.

"Captain Walsingham, the fate of my deeply injured friend adds another powerful motive for my insisting on your giving me instant sa-

tisfaction for his injuries, as well as for my own. Our carriages can take us at once to any spot you may select. I care not for the want of a second. I am perfectly willing that Colonel Fortescue should fulfil the double office; but I insist on instant satisfaction."

Colonel Fortescue laid his hand on Lionel's arm to restrain him. The caution was unnecessary. Lionel, stunned by the event which had occurred, heeded him not, scarcely heard or understood what he said; his mind was filled with horror at the scene he had just witnessed; he still felt the clutch of the dying man's hand upon his arm,—still saw his eyes turned up towards his own,—still heard the sounds of his voice mingling imprecations and prayers. He gazed at Tarleton with a look in which contempt and repugnance were mixed; but evinced no inclination to reply to him; and Colonel Fortescue said, in a dry cold tone :

"Men of honour, Mr. Tarleton,—men who have characters to maintain and to lose,—do not thus dispose of affairs of this sort. Captain Walsingham has placed the decision of

what is proper for him to do with regard to you in my hands : it no longer rests with him. I greatly doubt whether I shall permit him ever to meet you : certainly not to-day : certainly not with this intemperate and unmanly haste : nor, Sir, until a strict scrutiny into your conduct shall have established your right to call upon him. We part here, Sir," he added, drawing himself up proudly.

He was met with equal pride. " I will not, Sir," said Tarleton, " accuse Captain Walsingham of pusillanimity, or an evasion of my demand through fear—he does not deserve it : but I do accuse him, and you also, of the proud overbearing of your profession. Knowing that your own reputation secures you from risk, you trifle with the feelings of men as honourable, as courageous as yourselves. But Captain Walsingham was correct. I will adopt the maxim which he himself laid down : delays are unimportant when a man's heart is in his quarrel. Sooner or later, in England or out of it, we will meet, and this matter shall be fully debated."

With a dignity of manner which would have

adorned a better cause, he turned away into a different path.

Lionel had no inclination to answer him ; he felt wretched and distressed. His companion endeavoured to soothe him, told him that no particle of blame could attach to him. “ The poor wretch,” he said, “ has brought his fate upon himself by a total absence of generous and manly feeling, swayed, urged on evidently by the deep villain who has just quitted us. Had you acted otherwise than you have done, it would have been most criminal in you, it would have been madness : the fatal result was accidental and not your intention.”

Soothed by this, but still very heavy-hearted, and with a countenance pale and dejected, Lionel shook hands with his friend, and at once commenced his rapid journey to Portsmouth, which he reached that night ; and the next day embarked with his company, in which, by Lord Kennis’s powerful interest, Edward Wheatley, again restored to his strength and good looks, was now a sergeant.

The transport had on board five hundred as fine lads as England ever sent out to sustain

and increase her glories: and as with a leading wind it sailed close in shore, the rays of the evening sun fell upon her side, and showed every part of the vessel, crowded with 'red jackets,' swarming like bees, and all eagerly gazing on the receding coast. The same gay willingness to depart, the same fond hopes of return filled every bosom; and if as the white cliffs grew less distinct, some few sighs escaped from those who left their hearts behind them, they were not breathed by the least resolute, or the least willing defenders of their country.

We would all gladly look into the future; but how much the power of doing so would diminish the sum of human happiness! Could every individual of the gallant band which was now departing have known whether he should ever again step on English ground or was doomed to fill a grave in Spain, how little would have been the addition to the happiness of any! how great the gloom and despair of many, very many, who were now gay, happy, and contented!

CHAPTER VI.

TARLETON lost no time in reaching Wells, or in posting thence to Bristol. He had business in that city, which constrained him to remain there for some hours, although most anxious to be in London with as little delay as possible. He resolved therefore, to travel by that night's mail to town ; and having secured a private room in that most gloomy of all inns, the Bush, and ordered a late dinner, he sallied forth and was soon buried amidst the obscure and dirty lanes which form so large a proportion of the entire city.

It was several hours before he re-entered the inn, and took possession of the large dark gloomy room, in the centre of which the table was laid for his solitary meal. Nothing could well look more cheerless and uncomfortable : but Tarleton was fatigued and stood in need of food ; he

therefore paid little attention to the melancholy appearance of his apartment; and, his repast concluded, fixed his mind steadily on reconsidering every point, even the most minute, of the scheme he was about to execute. But as the day-light faded away, and every part of the ill-shaped apartment, the partitioned half of a large club-room, became dark and obscure, except close around the table, on which candles had been placed, he felt a discomfort at being alone, a dread of the gloom and darkness, which he not only wondered at but despised, at the very time that he was unable to conquer it. He took his hat and told the waiter as he passed him that he would have his coffee in the public room. With a quick step he walked down to the quay, which, crowded and bustling during the day, was now a silent wilderness of bales of goods, sugar casks and logs of foreign timber. It was low water, for at that time Bristol had not, aided by the ill-requited skill of one of her own citizens, converted a dangerous river into a magnificent floating harbour; and the entire channel was one black abyss of mud and darkness. It was a spot little calculated to dispel

gloomy reflections; but Tarleton paced it again and again.

“ Sublime - minded, philosophical, Philip Tarleton !” he exclaimed half aloud, with a scornful bitter laugh ; “ and you are absolutely afraid to sit in a dark room, like an ill-taught brat of five years old !” — He stood still. “ What cause have I for self-reproach ? the coward fool brought his fate upon himself :—a single spark of manly feeling, and he would have been safe from that Walsingham. Why did I look at his face as he lay there ? why, rather do I now pester myself with the remembrance ? A murderer ! Absurd ! Could I not have taken his paltry life in that accursed den without a particle of risk ? Have I not perilled my own life to revenge him ? Was he not a free agent ? and after all, his death was a mere accident. How I shall despise myself for all this after a few hours’ sleep !”

He endeavoured, but with little success, to fix his mind on various trains of thought ; and at length re-entered the inn. The coffee-room was crowded with the busy sons of trade. It was their hour of relaxation : and politics,

local disputes, and civic wit were abundant and loud. The bustle and the din were a relief to him : and as noise restores to some deaf persons the perfect sense of hearing, so his mind was calmed by the tumult around him. He enjoyed with critical attention the excellence of his coffee, and as he fixed himself in his corner of the mail, smiled at the paroxysm of feeling which had so lately unmanned him.

One of Philip Tarleton's earliest crimes had been the seduction of a young woman, whose parents lived near his father's residence. His attachment to her had been of short duration . but although neglectful and unkind, he had never totally abandoned the unhappy woman to her fate : he had taken and furnished for her a small house in an obscure part of London : and there, by taking lodgers, and with such uncertain aid as it pleased him to afford her, she just contrived to earn a scanty and precarious support for herself and one child. To this house Tarleton often resorted for his own convenience, never from affection for the poor victim who kept it. When not residing with Sir Edward Forrester, nor enabled by

his successful exertions at the card-table to live expensively on his own funds, or when any legal embarrassments rendered a temporary seclusion convenient, here he resided ; and here also he compelled the poor degraded woman to assist in all his schemes of vice. Remorse, poverty, and neglect, had long since changed the delicate fair-haired girl into an emaciated wretched-looking woman, old before her time, and without one trace remaining of her former beauty. Her child, a pale sickly boy, eight years old, whose light flaxen hair and pale blue eye were exactly what her own had been, was the only link which tied her to the world. Her feelings towards her seducer were strangely complicated : she detested him as the cause of her ruin, and of all the years of misery she had endured ; still she loved him as the father of her child, still felt for him, unknown almost to herself, those remnants of early affection which cling so firmly to a woman's heart ; and still was jealous of his love for others, although constrained to be the submissive obedient instrument in all his vicious intrigues. Of late, religious gloom had

increased her misery: she had become a bigotted and rigid papist; and taxed her feeble frame beyond its strength with all the absurd penances, which disgrace that division of the Christian Church.

With this unhappy woman Tarleton had now determined to take up his abode; but instead of proceeding to her house on his arrival in town, his first visit was to Sparkes: and it was with extreme annoyance he learnt that this person was absent from London, and was not expected to return until late in the evening. His returning then was certain, as he was engaged to preside at a convivial meeting at a neighbouring tavern, a class of engagements which he had never failed to keep: and there, and not at his own house, would he be found after nine o'clock. The delay was a bitter disappointment to Tarleton, as without the assistance of this man he could do nothing; and the success of his schemes depended upon his promptitude.

When the fatal event occurred at Wells, he had engaged to communicate the intelligence to Sir Edward Forrester's relatives: he

had done so whilst at Bristol, having written to Sir Edward's successor in the baronetcy and estate, who resided in Northumberland, to Mrs. Forrester, and to one or two other connections of the family : but he did not address any communication to Sir Edward's residence, either in London or in the country : and he took care that his letters should be too late for that day's post. It was therefore probable that it would be some time before the event was known in Brook Street. Still the loss of an entire day added greatly to his difficulties.

There was no help for it : and he bent his course to his intended abode, the house of the ill-fated Emma Woodford. The suddenness of his arrival did not surprise her, as his appearance there was usually without announcement : but her anxious eye at once detected that some subject of deep importance occupied his mind.

He paid but little attention to her or to her child ;—bad her make arrangements for his remaining there for some days ; and after a hasty repast, eaten almost in silence, shut himself up in his room.

Exactly at the time mentioned he proceeded to the tavern, the theatre of Sparkes's intended gaiety, where a riotous and noisy crowd had already assembled ; but to his renewed mortification he found that the attorney had not arrived ; and after one or two messages, he was informed by a vulgar fellow, who was already far from sober, and who dilated on the unspeakable sufferings he was then enduring in having the office of temporary president thrown upon him at a moment's notice, that a letter had been received from Sparkes declaring the impossibility of his being with them before twelve at night ; but that then neither death, nor the devil, nor even the law, should keep him from his valued allies. This information was followed by a warm assurance that any friend of their worthy President, the best fellow in existence, the jolliest dog in England, would be a most welcome addition to their social circle.

Tarleton turned away in disgust ; and retiring to a private room, directed the master of the house to inform him the instant the person for whom he was waiting should arrive.

Richard Sparkes, whose absence was now so bitterly lamented by his employer, was a somewhat strangely compounded character. He was the son of a respectable attorney in the country, and had been articled to his father. Before he was one and twenty an uncle had left him the uncontrolled possession of several thousand pounds ; and from a life of very strict discipline and very narrow means he had at once launched into every kind of dissipation. The degradation of his character was as rapid as the dispersion of his fortune ; and in a few years he was without reputation and penniless ; but possessing all the elements which enabled him in his turn to prey on others as he had been preyed upon ; and now, at the ripe age of forty, he was as accomplished a rogue as ever traversed Chancery Lane. His appearance and manner little indicated his real character : he was a good-looking well-built man, about the middle size, somewhat corpulent, bald-headed, with handsome intelligent features, an open frank countenance, and a laughing good-humoured air. It was only in his sharp, restless, twinkling grey eye, — that most

tell-tale of all the features,—that his real nature could be detected ; nor even there but by a very acute observer. His ruddy cheek spoke as much of health as of attachment to the table. He was the idol and the rallying point of the coarse convivial circle in which he moved ; he sung a good song, told a good story, the freer it was the better ; was a devoted admirer of the fair sex, and had the rare gift of being able to drink to excess without being vanquished by his wine. In the minor transactions of his profession he affected great liberality and straightforwardness, and had contrived to obtain a good name for various gratuitous exertions of his skill in favour of his poorer neighbours. He reserved all his villany and legal misdeeds for important occasions, where the advantage might be worth the risk.

Long and intimate as had been the connection betwixt him and Philip Tarleton, there was not a grain of friendship between them. Tarleton's refinement of manner was outraged by the vulgar hilarity of his agent, and by his assumption of equality ; while Sparkes hated his proud client for the distance at which he

kept him, and which was never relaxed even when he most required his aid.

Such was the man whose arrival at his Presidency was not announced to Tarleton until long after midnight, and more than two hours after his actual arrival at the house. At a glance Tarleton detected the high state of conviviality to which his legal adviser had attained, and suspected the trick which had been practised upon him : he deemed it however inexpedient to enter upon that point, and merely said :

“ Mr. Sparkes, I come to confer with you on business of very great importance to me and to you also. Time presses greatly, but it is quite obvious that you are in no state at present to enter into business which requires cautious handling.”

“ My dear fellow,” cried Sparkes, “ legal proceedings never budge an inch during the little hours. Come, let me introduce you to a good set of fellows as ever put their legs under a mahogany : they will be proud to receive you ;—and I am your devoted slave as early as you please in the morning,—seven o’clock, six o’clock, five o’clock, by all the

gods ! Devil seize me, if I won't forestall ' the broad-eyed watchful day ' to oblige an old friend like you."

Tarleton drew himself up. " The business is instant," he replied ; " tell me, Sir, are you now sufficiently sober to be able to attend to me ?"

" No !" was the reply : " God forbid I ever should be at this hour. But, take my word for it, Phil Tarleton, I am not drunk. I defy any man living to say he ever saw me drunk ;—ever took me at a time when, if it pleased me, I was not fit for business. But it does not please me now. Put your cursed pride in your pocket, Mr. Tarleton ; join us in yonder, or if you won't, why then fix your hour to-morrow, and say good night now. By Jupiter, one hour of virtuous liberty, as Kemble says, ' is worth a whole eternity ' in all the courts at Westminster !"

Tarleton paused ; and then in a subdued voice said :

" Sir Edward Forrester is dead." His auditor started, and with a coarse oath, expressed his surprise—almost his disbelief.—" Yes," continued Tarleton, " he has been shot

in a duel by young Walsingham ; and much that is important to me and may be advantageous to you, rests on the event. Are you in a state to hear and understand me ?”

“ Yes, I am : but wait two minutes and I will be more so.” He rang the bell, and ordered water to drink and for washing, to be brought to him. He bathed his head abundantly, and drank off two large goblets of the rarely tasted element ; and then turning to Tarleton, who had watched the process attentively, exclaimed :—“ Now, Sir, I am your’s, and as fit for work as a man who has never tasted brandy in his life ;—as fit ? fitter ! ten times fitter by all the gods !”

Succinctly Tarleton narrated the events at Cheddar and Wells ; dwelt strongly upon Forrester’s ingratitude and treachery towards him ; and then, although not without a pang, not without hesitation, and whilst a blush of shame tinged his cheek, explained his determination to obtain out of the possessions of his ungrateful friend that independence which his cowardly meanness had withheld from him.

Sparkes listened to the narration with pro-

found attention, and with an unchanged countenance ; except that when Tarleton laboured to justify his present intentions by the treachery and ingratitude of his patron, a smile declared how little importance he attached to that argument.

“ I am in possession,” said Tarleton, “ of false keys to Sir Edward Forrester’s desk, and to the interior compartments of it. I had them made yesterday at Bristol from wax impressions.”

“ Excellent !” cried Sparkes ; “ the forethought does you immortal honour.”

“ I propose,” continued Tarleton, smarting under the compliment ; “ that the will, which with your assistance and my knowledge of his affairs may be easily fabricated, shall be placed by me among his other papers of value. I will go as early as possible to his house in Upper Brook Street. Your untimely absence has cost me an entire day : but still there may be time. I shall make it appear that I am just arrived from the country ;—shall require the servants to give me the means of writing letters ; and whilst so employed the paper may

be safely deposited. But all this must be done before to-morrow's post comes in. I can build securely on no longer a period."

Sparkes, who had reposed his legs, splendid in white silk stockings and gorgeous shoe and knee-buckles, in an attitude of perfect ease upon a second chair, and had every now and then cast a complacent glance at their elegance of form and adornment, now changed his position; and skilfully twirling the chair round on one of its legs by the action of a single finger, appeared for some minutes entirely occupied by the amusement. At length he said, "What is the amount of your poor friend's personal property? Every acre of his land I know is entailed."

"I know not exactly," answered Tarleton; "but I have no doubt above thirty thousand pounds; probably forty thousand."

"Good:—and now, Philip Tarleton, what am I to have for putting a halter round my neck?"

Tarleton was galled by the insolent abruptness of the question; and by the want of confidence in his liberality which it evinced:

“You have not, Mr. Sparkes,” he said, “found me an ungrateful nor a niggardly client. If the property becomes mine, your reward shall be ten thousand pounds.”

“The terms are not fair, Sir. Business of this kind always proceeds on the principle of a fair division. I must have half.”

“It is unreasonable,” cried Tarleton; “and I refuse it.”

“And I, my proud gentleman,” said Sparkes, “will have it. Have you the power to obtain one single farthing without my help?”

“That argument applies equally to you,” said Tarleton; “and also in your station of life you will be a richer man with ten thousand pounds than I with the remainder.”

“Station of life,” exclaimed Sparkes, “delightful!”

“You know my terms,” said Tarleton, rising; “you also know my disposition and character. I change not.”

“Devilish unhandsome by all the powers!—devilish!”

“I can go elsewhere,” urged Tarleton, “and obtain the same aid.”

“Yes! and how soon should I show you up at Bow Street?”

“You dare not do it, Mr. Sparkes,” said Tarleton coolly.

“I do dare, Mr. Tarleton, and only try the experiment, and you shall find I do.”

“You are known, Sir, in every Court in London: and your assertion, unsupported as it would be by a single particle of evidence, would be worthless.”

“Well, I like straight-forward dealing,” cried the amiable lawyer, smoothing away the angry expression of his face; “no man breathing more so. There is some truth in that last remark of your’s, Phil Tarleton; and a good round sum with little risk, is better than a quarrel with a valued old friend and associate. Come, say fifteen thousand.”

“No, Sir, I will not add a farthing more.”

“Well, well!” cried Sparkes, with a sigh of resignation: “You are too many guns for me. I am a child in your hands, Phil:—and so,” he muttered, “would be the devil himself!—Come, let me see: I will be with you this morning at Woodford’s at six o’clock;—well,

earlier if you like; say five. But by the bye one more question, my dear Sir, to prevent mistakes: no poetry in your account of the Baronet's accident, eh? killed fairly by somebody else?—I don't affect to be squeamish; but no transaction among friends can go on smoothly and comfortably if there are any mental reservations. Eh?"

Tarleton's agency in the fatal duel pressed heavily upon his mind; and subdued the tone of indignation with which he repelled the suspicion.

"Well, well, no offence, my dear fellow; you understand my motives. It is equally important to us both that every thing should be clear and above board. At five I am yours. Now, we need not talk upon the business any longer.—I can manage it, signatures and all, without a grain of difficulty.—Come," he added, extending his hand, "business always gets on better for a little mirth and pleasure; come let me make you one of us in there."

Tarleton haughtily declined the offer, and bent his steps homewards. In a few minutes Sparkes was again the presiding deity of the

festive board; was again warbling out love-song after love-song, amid the fumes of brandy and tobacco; without any alteration having been produced upon him by the recent interview, except a pleasing conviction that an excellent piece of professional business had fallen in his way.

His orgies, although continued deep into the morning, did not prevent his being punctual to his appointment: and locking themselves into Tarleton's private room, the worthy confederates in less than two hours produced a will, very perfect in every particular of its execution. By it, Sir Edward devised to Mrs. Forrester a legacy of five hundred pounds; half that sum to each of her daughters; small sums to two or three other relatives; complimentary bequests to several of his acquaintance; legacies to the principal servants at his town and country houses, describing them, to prevent error, not by their names, but by the situations they held; and he appointed his dear and valued friend Philip Tarleton, Esq. late of Half Moon Street, but now residing with him, his sole executor and residuary

legatee. The will was written and witnessed by Sparkes: and as among his numerous attainments, he possessed the power of perfectly imitating any handwriting, he had no difficulty in affixing to it the signature of Sir Edward Forrester, copied exactly from letters produced by Tarleton. As the second subscribing witness he wrote, not for the first time, the name of a clerk formerly in his service, who had died several months before; to meet which circumstance, the will was dated some twelve months back.

Furnished with this important document, Tarleton, his mind in a state of feverish excitement, but with his usual perfect self-possession and calmness of demeanour, presented himself at Sir Edward Forrester's house at eight o'clock; having carefully assumed the dress and appearance of a person just arrived from a long journey. There was some difficulty, as he had anticipated, in rousing, at so early an hour, the lazy inmates; but at length, a half-dressed, half-awakened kitchen-maid, always the first victim to early rising, admitted him. Tarleton, in a tone of

well-assumed dejection, bade her summon the housekeeper; and the girl, after opening the shutters of the dining-room, and correcting, during the process, several errors in her toilet, proceeded to do so. The room thus offered to him, was not the one which he wished to enter; and therefore, throwing himself upon a seat in the hall, he awaited the arrival of the rotund and consequential housekeeper. She soon made her appearance; her temper, which twenty years of cooking in earlier life had somewhat injured, not being at all improved by the sudden termination of her morning's nap, the particular division of rest, which ladies of her station most insist upon: but she soon perceived from Tarleton's manner, that some fearful event had occurred. To her rapid enquiry after her master's welfare, Tarleton returned no other answer, than requesting her to give him the means of immediately writing some letters, and that he would afterwards confer with her. She turned into the dining-room.—It was an anxious moment; but Tarleton, apparently not noticing her, paced the hall once or twice, as

if oppressed by his feelings, and deep in reverie : then, as if unconscious of what he did, approached the library door, turned the key, and opened it.

“ That room is all dark and out of order, Mr. Tarleton,” said the portly matron ; “ had you not better go into the dining-room ? ”

“ Are there not writing materials in here ? ” asked Tarleton.

“ None fit for use, Mr. Tarleton ; but I will bring you my own in a minute.”

During this short dialogue, Tarleton had entered the room, and seated himself in a meditative attitude at the large table in the centre. The shutters were opened by the girl, and the housekeeper busied herself to collect pens, paper, &c. The ink, as she had suspected, was useless ; her own was sent for, and then she closed the door, and left him in undisturbed possession of the room.

Tarleton, although long hardened and practised in many vices, was new to a crime such as he was now engaged in ; and his hand shook, and his nerves thrilled as he sat down to write. His first note was so unsteadily

written, and so confusedly expressed, that he destroyed it; so did he the second: but, ashamed of this weakness, he exerted himself, and four or five letters to connexions of Sir Edward who were in or near town were soon written. One also was addressed to Sir Edward's most respectable solicitor; for he, like many other ill-conducted young men, had found it convenient to have more than one functionary of that sort attached to him. Having rung for a light to seal these letters, the real business of his visit commenced. When the servant, who brought the taper, and whose lengthened stare of enquiry Tarleton's conscience converted into suspicion of his guilt, had left the room, his first intention was to have fastened the door. He approached it; but there was no bolt, and deeming the noise of locking it the greater risk, he desisted.

The room, honoured by the name of library, was poorly furnished with volumes; but rich in fowling-pieces, pistols, fishing-tackle, bows, foils, whips of all sorts, and numerous representations of illustrious horses and dogs. The desk fortunately stood out of the range of the key-

hole of the door, that perpetual channel of domestic intelligence ; and with a noiseless step Tarleton now approached it. Opening it by means of the false key, he soon found an old family seal with many quarterings, which Sir Edward Forrester used to take great pride in employing on grand occasions. With this he re-sealed the will, which had before only borne the impression of a wafer-stamp ; this again he sealed up in a cover which had been prepared ; and then, by the aid of another key, deposited it safely in one of the inner drawers.

The whole operation was the work of a very few minutes, but it seemed an age to Tarleton ; and with a rapid hand he closed the front of the desk. As he did so the springs snapped sharply. To his feverish imagination the noise was as loud as a pistol, and with a look of terror he turned to the door, expecting every instant that the servants would rush in. The perspiration dropped from his forehead ; and as he resumed his chair, he felt his bodily strength totally exhausted ; nor was it until some minutes had elapsed that he recovered himself.

He then sealed the letters, and rose to summon the housekeeper : but he paused, and again seating himself, did what every agent in bad or good enterprises of moment should do, reviewed every step of the process which he had completed, and satisfied himself that nothing had been omitted.

The pompous Mrs. Jenkinson was at length called in, and informed of her master's death, with as many of the circumstances attending it as he deemed it expedient to communicate. He explained the position in which he himself was placed, as one of the parties at the fatal meeting, and the necessity for withdrawing from the pursuit which would probably be made. Having given the name of a coffee-house at which letters might be addressed to him, he departed, carrying away the sympathy of all the servants ; especially of one or two very good-looking housemaids, who, even in the first tumult of grief for their late master, their joy at the idea of handsome mourning, and a rapid retrospection of their peculiar claims to testamentary attentions, could not

restrain their commiseration at the deep sorrow which clouded their favourite Mr. Tarleton's handsome features.

Some days elapsed before Sir George Forrester made his appearance in town. Instantly on the receipt of Tarleton's letter he had proceeded to Wells, and remained there until all the necessary arrangements for the unfortunate young man's funeral had been completed. Accompanied by his solicitor, he now examined the depositories of the deceased, and the important document which had so recently been placed there was soon discovered. The contents excited but little wonder; Sir George well knew the weak character of his cousin, and was not surprised that his artful companion should have availed himself of his ascendancy over him: his only regret was that so scanty a provision should have been made for Mrs. Forrester and her daughters; and this he at once resolved to remedy.

His legal friend, after the deliberate inspection which professional men are accustomed to give such instruments, pronounced it 'a good will:' and recommended that it should be im-

mediately placed in the hands of the person named as executor. A communication was accordingly addressed to Philip Tarleton ; but a considerable delay took place before any reply was received. A letter was then handed to Sir George by a solicitor of the first eminence. In it Tarleton explained the circumstances which prevented him at present from coming forward ; and requested that the will might be given to the bearer of his letter. It was so given ; and the usual steps for giving effect to it were forthwith commenced.

CHAPTER VII.

THE news of the duel, and its fatal termination, gave rise to strong and various feelings at East Leighton and Rylands. Clara Forrester shuddered at the danger her lover had been exposed to on her account, and could not but feel with horror that she was the remote cause of the death of one so nearly related to herself, and so ill prepared to die.

When the first hours of agitation were over, Mrs. Forrester, little swayed as she was by mercenary motives, could not but contemplate with anxiety the important alteration which the event might produce on the prospects of her daughters and herself. She knew that her nephew's large personal property was entirely at his own disposal, and she and Hardinge awaited with anxiety the announcement of its future destination.

The intelligence from Wells removed from
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the Earl's mind a weight of alarm, rendered the more painful from the necessity of concealing it ; and as to our heroine at the Bower, she, as might be expected, was all agitation, exclamation, and surprise. The gay indifference of Lionel's parting interview with herself, under ' such an approaching catastrophe, so immeasurably terrific,' excited her unbounded admiration,—“ a catastrophe which,” as she explained to the open-mouthed and colourless-cheeked Phœbe, “ would, if she had been a man,—horrid thought !—have coagulated every particle of her blood, and her courage too ! Heroic, sweet, affectionate, sensible, young creature !” The ‘ globe of fat’ was still ‘ rolling away’ before her mental eye ‘ into the distant vallies :’ “ Yes, he should be his Clara's !—yes, nature framed them for reciprocal felicity !” Two or three sighs, wafted in the direction of the Manor-house, concluded this half-audible, half-mental ejaculation ; and as she looked at her six thin volumes of Pope's *Iliad*, thoughts of versifying the deadly conflict passed across her mind ; but she recollected the fate of her ‘ Tribute ;’ and the acci-

dent of the mutton chops daunted her courage and unstrung her lyre.

But other and still more important subjects of contemplation filled her mind. She knew that Mrs. Forrester and Caroline would in a day or two return to Bath ; she knew that the dreaded dinners, teas, and suppers at Hill-side Cottage would immediately re-commence with double violence ; and that her fate, which the late events had suspended, would now irrevocably be decided. She was convinced that never before had she stood so high in her Charles's good graces, that Mrs. Forrester and Caroline both esteemed her, and that Clara warmly returned her affection. She trembled a little when she thought of the growing friendship between the enthusiastic girl and Jane Mackenzie ; but she stilled her fears by recollecting that poor Miss Mackenzie was, to all intents and purposes, a married woman—married to the memory of her deceased lover ; this was quite certain—every sympathetic faculty vouched for the fact, and it was in strict accordance with the Scottish character and feeling. Now, therefore, were ' the fetters round her Charles's heart to be firmly, finally fixed,

or cast away for ever into the stream of time.'

On this, as on similar momentous occasions, the opinion and advice of Mrs. Wilkinson were resorted to. Miss Penelope was dismissed into her own room, to complete her French exercise, and a conference took place between the ladies, which lasted the entire period of the Doctor's morning circuit.

"My dearest, dearest friend," the fair spinster began; "I and all my hopes are standing on the very brink of a precipice. Dear, sweet Mrs. Forrester goes away on Thursday morning; and the little wretch has ordered a haunch of mutton for that very day; and I know that she has bespoken every chicken Farmer Thornton has belonging to him."

"Oh, of course it will be the old story again! Now or never, my dear Miss Chamberlayne. You must pluck up courage, and make the man declare himself. I am certain Mrs. Forrester thinks he likes you."

"Dear lady-like creature! I am sure she appreciates me: and—and——" the maiden's cheek was tinged with a treble blush as

she replied:—"and it is natural she should wish him not to have a *very* large family."

There was something very much amiss in Mrs. Wilkinson's utterance, as she replied,—
"Certainly, certainly;" but Miss Chamberlayne would not notice it, and sighing profoundly, she resumed:—"Declare himself, my good Mrs. Thingamee! declare himself! he won't! he won't! no power, human or divine, can make him!—It is I, my dear friend, yes, it is I who must divulge myself! I must, I will! though I know I shall die in the attempt."

"Die! fiddlesticks!—once begin, and it will all go on as easy as possible. Charles Hardinge is just the man to be won by a bold game."

"Bold game!" muttered Miss Chamberlayne to herself; "bold game! heavenly powers!—But, my dearest, dearest friend, was such a thing ever done before?—how do you know that it is so easy. You and dear good Mr. Wilkinson,—you never underwent the mental pang?"

"I, oh! no, I hadn't many troubles of that sort!"

The pensive spinster paused, sighed again—and then summoning up her courage to the hazardous question, she whispered out:—
“Tell me, my dearest friend, tell me, how did you manage to make him propose?”

“Make him propose?” exclaimed Mrs. Wilkinson. “Gracious goodness, Miss Chamberlayne, why he did nothing but propose all day long. Oh, my dear!” she continued, uttering something like a sigh, for, matter-of-fact sensible person as she was, even she could not advert to her days of early courtship without some tender reminiscences: “oh, my dear, there never was such a man as Wilkinson!” she simpered and looked down; “and yet he was just the same regular creature then as he is now. Why, all the time that we were courting, busy or not busy, and all weathers too, except it rained cats and dogs, never did a day pass but he came to take me out a walking: and there we used to walk exactly the same walks; and he used to kiss me always at exactly the same stiles, and they were sure to be the worst ones;—heigh dear!”

“Heigh dear!” echoed the maiden in a tone of gentle envy; “heigh dear!”

“Why, I remember,” continued the matron, long-forgotten moments crowding upon her mind; “I remember, as well as if it were yesterday, one Saturday evening we went past one of the stiles without his thinking of it; he was so busy talking of our taking old Morris’s business at Taunton, and he never found it out till we got to the bottom of the meadow; and then my patience what a piece of work he made!”

“Why, what did he do, my dear friend?”

“Do! why he wanted me to go back again, and said it was not fair, and all manner of nonsense.”

“And did you go back?” asked Miss Chamberlayne, blushing slightly as she made the inquiry.

“Go back? no, to be sure I didn’t. I knew my own importance a good deal too well for that!”

Miss Chamberlayne, whose gentle pity was excited even by the distresses of an apothecary’s apprentice, who had been deprived of a

kiss some eighteen years before, asked in a tone of great commiseration :—" And did you not let poor, dear, good Mr. Wilkinson salute you at all?"

" Not at that stile," answered Mrs. Wilkinson, laughing; " Ah, Miss Chamberlayne, if Charles Hardinge had been such a man as Wilkinson, you would not have had so much toil and trouble with him!"

" Toil and trouble!" ejaculated the spinster, drawing herself up and looking somewhat offended; but she was too low-spirited to do battle: and bending down her head, she sighed pensively, and murmured in a dejected tone: " Toil, toil and trouble indeed!"

" Come, my dear," said Mrs. Wilkinson, cheerfully: " I will not let you get out of spirits. Miss Clara is all the morning at the Mackenzie's. Why can't you get hold of the man, and walk him up and down the green lanes, till he proposes."

Miss Chamberlayne clasped her hands together and exclaimed, the tears starting into her eyes, : " Mrs. Thingumbob, I firmly believe, as I am a virtuous woman, that I might

walk myself off my legs first! But never mind! never mind! It is my duty to try for both our sakes; it is I, it is I, who must break through the ice: yes, I must—I will, propose. But, my dearest friend, must it be green lanes? won't the turnpike road do? There is something so immeasurably indelicate in walking alone with a man in a green lane, stiles and all. And yet to be sure," she added, after a pause of reflection, "green umbrageous shades do tranquillize to love:—but then, again, I should have twice as much courage on the turnpike road."

Mrs. Wilkinson laughed outright; "Nonsense, nonsense!" she exclaimed, "it won't do half as well: every person who comes along will put you out. Walk him up among the hills; you go every day to old Nelly's cottage: take him up there with you."

"No, my dearest friend, it must be the Mill-lane:—not up to poor old Nelly's. I never can express myself elaborately, when I am walking up and down hill. I have not breath enough?"

"Well, well, then the Mill-lane," cried Mrs.

Wilkinson, giving a glance at the clock, a signal which Miss Chamberlayne well knew had reference to the Doctor's dinner. She at once departed, musing as she pensively approached her Bower on the appalling scene which she had to go through; and endeavouring to recollect which was the greenest and most horizontal lane in the parish.

The Doctor had just concluded his fourth and last glass of superlatively good port, an annual present from the Rylands cellars; and had just stretched his long, thin, booted legs under the table: the chuckle excited by two or three choice bits of the recent conference which conjugal affection had reported had just subsided into a doze, and Mrs. Wilkinson herself was about to enjoy the only twenty minutes of inactivity which she indulged in, when a message was brought that Miss Chamberlayne particularly wished to speak to her in the garden.

Our maiden heroine looked more pale and agitated than usual: she grasped Mrs. Wilkinson's arm, and exclaimed:—"My dearest, dearest friend, I cannot,—cannot,—cannot do

it! it is morally, physically, and entirely impossible!"

"Do what?" asked Mrs. Wilkinson, so surprised at her manner as not to recollect at the moment to what she could allude; "do what?"

"Propose!" cried the spinster, elevating her eyes to heaven; "I cannot! I have struggled and struggled, but all in vain.—I cannot. I had rather sacrifice every hope I have got. But I hope you have done dinner, my dearest friend? I have hardly been able to eat a morsel to speak of."

"Oh yes," said Mrs. Wilkinson, "we have done dinner. You had better walk in; you won't mind Wilkinson's sleeping, poor fellow; such a round!"

"No, my dearest friend, impossible—absolutely impossible! I only want to ask you one single, unequivocal question. What do you say to my sending him an anonymous letter, to open his eyes to my affections? What do you say, my dearest friend, to my addressing him under the modest cloud of an anonymous pen?"

Mrs. Wilkinson was at first afraid to trust her voice to say anything, Miss Chamberlayne's tone and manner were so superlatively ludicrous; and the fervour of approaching composition was so apparent in her tone and gesture: at length she said: "Well, I have no great objection to an anonymous letter; but what have you given up the green lanes for?"

"Why, my dearest friend, the more I reflected upon them, the more my modesty revolted. I should have sunk under the attempt. Besides,—besides, he never will walk out with me without my darling Clara; no, he wont. So do, do let me address him under an anonymous cloud."

"Well, do, my dear," said Mrs. Wilkinson, her gratitude to the Earl, and her conjugal affection always uppermost in her thoughts; "only mind that you send me a copy to look over. You had better send it, for there is no knowing when Wilkinson will be out. But wont you walk in now?"

"Not for worlds, not for concentrated worlds! my mind is overflowing with ideas.—I would not stop a moment for countless

thousands.—If I was not to begin to compose at once, they would all fly off at an instantaneous tangent, all be lost and,

‘ Like the air-drawn vision of a dagger,
Be baseless all behind !’ ”

In an inconceivably short space of time, she cleared the distance between the apothecary’s shop and her own writing-desk, and sat down to her task. Her great fear was, that however short the words she selected, however brief her sentences, she should not be able to disguise her style.

“ Well,” she exclaimed, “ let it be so!—let him suspect,—he never can divine !”

At first, she had determined to write in the masculine gender, as it would make the modest cloud more dense; but when it came to the pinch, she could not do it; it would give so indelicate a tone to the whole of the letter; it would be so like having a male confidant.

She began with what she persuaded herself ought not, in strictness, to be considered as a departure from truth, but only a bold poetic figure.

“ You have never seen,”—thus was the letter worded;—“ and never will behold the

pen which now addresses you. Yet she knows you well,—alas, too well!—Charity and friendship, hand-in-hand, seek to protect you.—Happiness and misery beckon you onwards.—To fragrant flowery fields the first; to scorching scouring sands the second. Maiden purity smiles on your manly virtues. She, whom I will not, need not, must not name, loves you, and loves you for yourself alone.—Speak, and she is yours.—I flatter not to deceive.—Purse-proud presumption seeks your ruin.—Shun the gilded poison.—I counsel to befriend. If you love simplicity and virtue, unmingled tenderness, and pure affection, and virgin love, as ardent as it is refinedly chaste, speak,—banish your modest fears—dispel your needless diffidence—view your own merits with the eyes of every other human being—woo her, and she is yours. Yes, I, unknown interpreter of love, say with the voice of fate, she is yours!

“ But if you pause, you are lost.—If you are dazzled by the gilded lustre of deceit and fury, you are undone.—If you yield to the allurements of unwholesome luxury, you are de-

stroyed. Mark my prophetic words!—You are leaning over the outside verge of a malignant fate. Oh turn back, and Paradise is at your feet,—the paradise, the truest, the tenderest, the purest paradise of a virtuous woman's modest heart.

“ Why the little immoral demon is permitted to disgrace the surface of the habitable world, Heaven only knows. If you drink in her intoxicating fumes, inevitable misery is yours. What a contrast!—purity and love, as ardent as maiden modesty allows—no more—impurity and rage, as deadly as despair—tremble and draw back.

“ I know, I long have known the happiness of married bliss. But it is not the sympathetic kindness of a female bosom that propels my plume. Again I say, speak and be—BLEST!

“ Seek not to discover the friendly pen which traces these pure lines. I have said, I say again, you never have, you never will behold her. But friendship's ethereal essence disdains the narrow bounds of space and time, and rising superior to the low pursuits of earth, looks

forward for its sublimer recompense in more congenial skies.

“ Adieu ! adieu ! Be wise, be prompt, be bold ! Your’s,

“THE IMPENETRABLY UNKNOWN.”

The thoughts rose so quickly to her mind, the words flowed so abundantly from her pen that it was not without an effort she brought her epistle to a close, as she did so, she exclaimed :

“ This is inspiration ! If he has a heart within him—but I don’t think he has—this must melt it. Heaven knows I seek as much my Charles’ happiness as my own !” She reperused her letter with inexpressible delight. At the last sentence she paused—she felt it was too near an approach to her own unfettered style ; but she could not make up her mind to expunge it ; that and the demon part were, in her opinion, worth all the rest of the production put together. “ Friendship’s ethereal essence !” she exclaimed, waving her arm ; “ sublimer recompense in more congenial skies ! Yes, it shall go. He may suspect—he never can divine. He may suspect—yes ; but he *must* approve !”

This letter reached Hardinge by a cross-post about twenty-four hours after Mrs. Wilkinson's copy of it had caused Lord Kennis the first hearty laugh he had enjoyed since Lionel's departure.

The procedure seriously annoyed, almost alarmed our hero. He exclaimed, nearly in the very words, that his fair pursuer had used on a much less fearful occasion—"Merciful powers! how do I know what she will do next?" Various plans of self-defence occurred to him—should he write to her a serious letter of advice—should he request Mrs. Middleton, of whom she stood in great awe, to lecture her—should he make Wilkinson put her under a course of cooling medicine? He perceived clearly that something must be done, but what was best for all parties he was at a loss to determine.

Graver and more important events however soon occupied his entire attention. On the fourth day after Lionel's departure, the intelligence so long expected and dreaded of Viscount Walsingham's death was received, and a gloom was cast over Rylands, and over many a noble and many an humble roof around.

How true are the words of Davie Deans's old servant; 'Eh, sirs! but a father's heart's a queer thing.' For a long period Lord Kennis had known that his eldest son's days were numbered; his mind had been made up to the event, and he had looked forward to it with perfect calmness. In all his day-dreams of the future greatness of his house, this event had been considered as certain. But when it was announced to him, the blow appeared as violent as if it had never been expected. His child's early days came back to his remembrance. The long years of pain and hopeless disease, which in the headlong excitement of the chace a too daring leap had fixed upon the youth, were forgotten. He thought only of the lovely child, the bold, active, healthy boy, all he had been, and all he promised to have become; and the father was bowed down by the stroke. All Hardinge's time and exertions were employed to solace him, and in a few days the old man was again himself.

Nearly at the same time Mrs. Forrester announced to her brother the import of Sir Edward's will. Hardinge was too well acquainted

with the Baronet's character to be surprised at his having acted ungenerously towards his relatives ; or that his wily companion should have moulded him to his own purposes. But a second letter was shortly afterwards received from Mrs. Forrester, in which she told him that important circumstances regarding Sir Edward Forrester had been communicated to her, and implored him without a day's delay to come to her at Bath. He instantly did so, and thus the last, the most powerful engine of Miss Chamberlayne's passion was rendered nugatory, and her Charles had flown away without her having once seen him, since her mysterious and burning eloquence had reached his eye.

The information which Mrs. Forrester communicated to him was indeed important. Sir Edward's will had been much discussed in the circles at Bath ; and it appeared that on two separate occasions the deceased had been heard to declare that he had never made a will, nor ever would, until he were married. On both occasions the assertion had been made in gay society, and in a sportive thoughtless tone ; nevertheless the impression on those who had

been present was strong that he had spoken the fact.

Hardinge instantly wrote to his friend Drummond, requesting him to enter a caveat against the will. He then in his business-like and able manner obtained from nearly all the persons present on the two occasions their written testimony of the fact, and armed with this evidence threw himself into the mail, and was in London within forty-eight hours after the receipt of his sister's letter.

Most cordial was the meeting between our hero and Mr. Drummond ; and unwearied the attention which they both gave to the important object of his visit. The services of the most able counsel were secured, and every step was taken to sift to the bottom the fraud, which there was so much reason to believe had been attempted.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE law, abundant as it is in disagreeable processes, has few more annoying than that of a caveat being entered against a will. For a considerable time all that is known by the parties interested is the simple fact that such a step has been taken, and that a barrier has been suddenly put up between them and their expected wealth: why or wherefore remains a secret. When honesty and good faith have to undergo this period of suspense, the trial is painful; but it becomes one of alarm and terror to those whose conscience accuses them of fraud.

Philip Tarleton was not a man whose temperament enabled him to endure without severe suffering the state of feverish anxiety in which he was placed. Few men were more constitutionally courageous; few when the hour of

exertion came were more indifferent to danger, or trembled less at the approach of death: but his mind was imaginative and enthusiastic in no ordinary degree. Restless, nervous, and agitated, whilst inactive, no sooner did real danger approach—no sooner was there a necessity for action—than he became cold, tranquil, and deliberate. His conduct whilst his fate was suspended between life and death in the Mendip Cave evinced this mixture of strength and weakness. His self-possession then gave way before the lengthened uncertainty of his trial: had he at his weakest moment known that his death was certain, he would at once have become as tranquil, as unconcerned, as if instead of life he had been about to lay aside a worn-out garment.

With a mind so constituted, the state of suspense in which he was now placed was agitating in the extreme. But other and still darker subjects of meditation pressed upon him. The deadly meeting at Wells became day by day more constantly present to his mind. Every circumstance connected with it, even the most trivial, recurred perpetually to his memory:

the path from the road to the ground, every minute particular of the field itself, the trees, the hedges, the thick soft grass beneath his feet, the cattle startled from their pasture by the report of the pistols, and collected together in a distant corner of the meadow ; all this dwelt with painful exactness upon his eye. The last half-formed accents of reproach and accusation which with convulsive effort the dying man had laboured to utter ; and which, inaudible as they had been to every one else, conscience had made clear and distinct to him, rang in his ears. But still more fearfully, more constantly present to his memory was the look of terror and entreaty which the weak unfortunate young man had cast upon him when he compelled him a third time to face his opponent. Hour by hour Tarleton's self-condemnation became more strong ; he felt that he was a murderer ; and it was in vain he employed his subtle intellect in long trains of reasoning to prove to himself that he was not such : that Forrester was a free agent, that he had brought his doom upon himself, that the fatal result was after all accidental, that if

young Walsingham was to be absolved from the guilt of intentionally depriving his adversary of life, the charge of murderous intention could not attach to others. The sophistry was ineffectual; his conscience overturned it all, and told him that but for his treachery the friend, whose bread he had eaten for years, whose wasteful bounty had supplied his every want, would now have been a living man instead of a cold festering corpse.

His gloom and remorse became by indulgence more and more strong; and perpetually he detected himself repeating again and again the one single word ‘Murderer.’ It was the last sound his lips formed when he laid down to sleep; it was his first waking thought; and his dreams only repeated the fearful visions of the day. He shunned society; he dreaded solitude: his boy, for whom he had never before evinced the slightest regard, was now the only object that interested him. He required that he should be perpetually with him; spoke to his mother of his future intentions towards the child; of the school at which he should be placed, and of his delicate health, with an

anxiety that surprised whilst it pleased her. Still greater was her astonishment when he desired, not without hesitation, that the child's little bed should be moved into his own sleeping-room.

Tarleton was no weak baby, who feared to be in the dark alone ; but his nerves were shaken and unstrung ; and the presence of an innocent child near him, one whose growing affection he already perceived, soothed his feelings ; and during many a long hour of the night whilst unable to sleep, it solaced him to watch the placid features of his boy, sunk in the enviable repose of innocence and childhood.

This strange change in his character alarmed the timid, broken-spirited Emma Woodford : she strove to divine the cause ; she dreaded some impending misfortune ; and the frequent visits of the attorney Sparkes, a man whom she knew Tarleton detested, convinced her that difficulties of no ordinary kind were closing round him.

Sparkes rallied his client on his gloom and want of spirit ; spoke lightly of the caveat ; not one in twenty of such things, he said, were

ever supported, were even worth the paper they were written upon; and defied all the lawyers in the kingdom to disprove the signatures on the will. "Give me a day or two," he said, "and I will tell you all about it. I have been putting out my feelers, and I shall know all that Bailey and Forbes have in their pompous heads before night. You have nothing to do, but to make yourself comfortable and easy. Why the devil, my dear fellow, do you mope away your life here, and look as lean and savage as a wild cat? Join a round dozen of us at the Mermaid to-night,—choice spirits, wits, authors, men of genius, yes and men of *talent* too," he added, with a knowing wink. "Join us, my dear Phil; say the word."

Tarleton replied coolly, "I must decline your offer, Mr. Sparkes, I have little inclination for gay society: and indeed at present it will be best that we should not be seen more in each other's company than can be avoided. I am not aware that our intercourse need extend beyond matters of business."

"Insolent, upstart beggar!" muttered the attorney; and then added aloud, "You puzzle

me outrageously, my good fellow. What the devil is the use of being a knave, or a murderer either—for to look at you one would fancy you had cut the puppy baronet's throat yourself—if you make such a misery of it? Why run the risk, and then give up the enjoyment? But you know best, I suppose: so I am your humble servant, Mr. Philip Tarleton. I'm off. Thank Jupiter, all the world isn't of your kidney."

"The curse of being associated with such a degraded villain!" exclaimed Tarleton, when he was alone; "the curse of being constrained to endure his presence, his taunts, and, ten times worse than all, his familiarity! It is poison to me; and yet I do and must endure it. I am bound and fettered to him: he knows it; exults in it; and gratifies his insolent malice by trying my forbearance to the utmost, certain that he can do it with impunity. And these are the first pleasures I have purchased with that poor wretch's blood!"

He attempted to occupy his attention with a book. Through all the gay and vicious life which he had led, he had never lost his taste

for the studies of his youth ; and he now opened his favourite classic ; the book which had always been the most congenial to his mind, which had always retained the most powerful control over him. But his eye dwelt on the familiar lines of Juvenal without their import reaching his mind. He turned from one glorious passage to another, but in vain ; and with a sigh he closed the volume. His boy, who had glided back into the room as soon as he knew his father was alone, and had crept up to him but without speaking, now looked enquiringly in his face to learn whether his childish babble would be allowed. A kind nod encouraged him ; and long histories of toys and games and playmates won the attention, which the Satirist's majestic verse had failed to gain. Tarleton's mind was soothed. He entered into all the wishes of his young companion, showed him pictures, examined his playthings, and gave him paper and a pencil, for the boy was at the age when every child is an artist. His first attempt was some horse or man ; but it was abandoned as too difficult : and he contented himself with tracing

over the large crown and arms marked in the paper. Proud of his success, he showed the work to his father; and encouraged by the praise he obtained, resumed his labours on the other leaf. This also in high glee he laid before him:—and through life the boy never lost the remembrance of the horrid change which came over his father's features. The water-mark which the child's pencil had rendered visible was BROCK - DOVER - 1810.

Tarleton started up—pushed the affrighted boy aside with rude violence; and rushing down stairs, burst into the room where Mrs. Woodford was sitting. For some moments his utterance failed him: then he cried, “Woman, where is the paper you gave me—the paper you gave me the first day I came? tell me.”

The poor woman trembled violently. “Merciful powers, Mr. Tarleton, what is the matter? you shake like an aspen leaf.”

Tarleton made a strong effort to control himself—“Mrs. Woodford,” he said, “what paper have you got in the house? show it me.”

She brought him some loose sheets from a bureau: they were not the same, and Tarleton

breathed more freely. "When," he asked, "did you buy what I have up stairs?"

"Yesterday, Sir;" but the confidence which the answer gave, was crushed when she added, "It is the same paper and the same price as what I bought for you the first day you came."

He returned to his own apartment: and dismissing the child, who alarmed and uncertain what to do, had remained fixed to the spot, he sat down calmly to reflect on the new danger which threatened him. The will had been ante-dated more than a year to remove all danger in the forgery of the second witness's signature; and it therefore bore in itself absolute proof of its invalidity. There appeared no ground to hope that it had been written on a different paper; but he resolved that his first step should be to ascertain this point beyond a doubt. He put his formal copy of the will into his pocket, threw himself into a coach, and drove to Doctors' Commons.

Explaining who he was, and stating his doubt as to the exact correctness of certain words as they stood in the copy which he produced, he requested to be allowed to compare

it with the original. The will was written in a very small hand, and occupied only one page of the sheet, but the second leaf had not been torn off; and as its official guardian handed it to Tarleton, his eye, sharpened by fear, saw at the first glance the dated mark distinctly visible in the blank leaf.

Tarleton was prepared for the worst; and no eye, even the most acute, could have detected agitation or anxiety in the cool deliberate look, and the leisurely manner, with which he compared the documents: and yet it added to the provoking extent of his ill-fortune that the fatal half-sheet might have been torn off, and yet the will remain complete.

It was an important moment in his life. He was standing perfectly alone; the clerk was engaged at a distance with another person; a fire was close to him, every evidence of his guilt might in an instant have been destroyed. But his anxiety for wealth withheld him; and still more was his proud spirit restrained by his unwillingness to admit the guilt which such an action would have betrayed: besides there were still strong grounds for hope: the

original instrument might perhaps never but once again be referred to ; and a hundred persons might read every word it contained, without detecting the faint shades in the texture of the paper. He determined to abide by the result, and with an unshaken hand restored it to the incautious functionary.

Tarleton immediately proceeded to Sparkes's office ; he was out, and it was some hours before they met ; when they did so, the attorney was in high spirits.

“ My dear fellow,” he said ; “ it is all right, all correct. Bailey and Forbes are devilish high fellows ; but if they expect that all their clerks will keep their secrets, they are cursedly mistaken. A couple of shiners cleverly thrown in, and I know the whole of it”—he then mentioned the grounds of the caveat—“ Care not a farthing for it—meet them in every court in England—What's a booby's prattle compared to his sign manual ? They'll never attempt it.”

Tarleton then informed him of the new danger.—The pettifogger's countenance fell: he bit his lips. “ Damnably, diabolically pro-

voking!—By all that's sacred I had intended to have torn off the cursed leaf—I had raised my hand to do it—Devilish, devilish bad luck!”

Angry recrimination passed between the two conspirators. Tarleton accused Sparkes of being half stultified when he prepared the instrument. “It is false!” exclaimed the attorney fiercely; “it is false as hell. It was your own cowardly haste that has led to it all. Had you allowed the thing to have been done quietly, and in a business-like manner, and let the will have been kept by me, as I wanted, we should have been all right.”

“I repeat, Sir,” said Tarleton, unmoved by the insulting terms addressed to him; “I repeat, that had not your faculties, such as they are, been stultified by drink, you would have examined the paper before you used it: those tricks and subtleties of practice are the very points, on which assistance is expected from persons such as you. I only blame myself for having trusted my life in the hands of a drunkard.”

Sparkes, although his naturally choleric tem-

per had been tamed down by a long series of professional conflicts, was on the point of making some insulting answer: but he checked himself; "Devil take it," he exclaimed, "this is no time for quarrelling.—Phil Tarleton, I ask your pardon for my d — d rude words. Curse me, if there is a man in existence I should be so sorry to offend as you."

He put out his hand, but Tarleton appearing not to notice the action merely said, in his usual cool manner: "You are right, Sir; we shall be ill-employing our time, you by insulting language, or I by condescending to resent it. It behoves us at once to consider the extent of the danger in which we are placed. Can we meet it?—or must we give way before it, and leave England at once?"

The stake was the largest that Sparkes had ever played for. Hardened as he was, and having like all other desperate men long since been accustomed to look at the gallows as the probable termination of his labours; and like them chiefly solicitous to postpone that termination as long as possible; the shame of detection, the loss of character formed no elements

of his calculations; he weighed only the rich prize against the danger, and without hesitation decided to abide the risk.

“Give it up,” he cried; “no not if I had twenty necks to be hanged by, and knew that every one of them would be stretched. My dear fellow, no blot is a blot till it is hit. The will probably wont be looked at again, but by the stupid clerks who are half asleep, and would no more think of poking out for paper-marks than of flying. Mind, my good fellow,” he continued after a pause; “I don’t mean to say that we arn’t standing in a rather ticklish position. If the trick is blown and they get hold of us, we are both dead men if we had ten thousand lives. We must go cautiously to work, Tarleton. We must watch our opponents night and day. Bailey and Forbes fancy all their clerks are as immaculate as they pretend to be themselves:—but for all that I have a friend in the enemy’s camp, and *‘fend surprises’* is the word.”

“Is not the will my property?” asked Tarleton; “can I not recover possession of it?”

“Impossible, my dear fellow, impossible.

The danger would be ten times greater ; and our fifty thousand consols lost for ever. But it can't be done. Our game is clear—Prepare the means and be ready to start for America at a moment's notice : and let us always know exactly where we can find each other.—I will be all eyes and ears ; and we will rally through it yet. By Jupiter, I have been in and out of worse scrapes than this.”

They parted, and Tarleton retraced his steps homeward towards Islington. As he crossed Blackfriars, he leant over the parapet of the bridge, in half unconscious examination of the noble and extended scene around him.

The magnificence of the Thames, its broad extent of water, its pompous buildings, its unrivalled bridges, its forests of masts, its crowd of rapid boats are almost always deprived of much of their effect by the thick and smoke-laden atmosphere, through which they are viewed. It is only in that peculiar state of the air,—well known to those two most keen observers of the sky, the sailor and the landscape painter,—which precedes rain, that the effect of one of the noblest city-views in the world is

felt to its full extent. The air is then of such a glassy clearness that objects at a mile's distance are as sharp and vivid as if seen within twenty yards : and a power and effect are given to the panorama, which it possesses at no other time.

Such was its aspect now : and Tarleton's vivid imagination was enchained by the scene before him. His danger, nay his remorse were for the time forgotten, and feelings of admiration and pride at the rich splendour of the scene, filled his mind, as his eye ranged over the splendid variety of objects before him, which makes England's proud capital the wonder of the world. But by degrees the images which his eye received, faded before they reached his mind ; a re-action of feeling came violently upon him : his hands grasped the stone parapet, and for a moment the wish of casting off the misery which oppressed him mastered his resolution. But the bodily action changed again the current of his feelings. " Coward, coward ! " he exclaimed ; " and am I come even to this ? to sneak like a poltroon from the hazard which those whom I despise can face with fortitude ? Why," he continued, " why am I thus sub-

dued?—Am I so new to crime,—has my former life been so pure, so virtuous that I must needs break down at the first check of conscience? has my pride, my reason left me thus unprepared? A reckless hardened villain, whose range of intellect is limited to a drinking song, has more reason to boast of strength of nerve than I—No,” he cried drawing back from the contemplation of the water, as if fearful of again trusting his resolution—“no, I will not act the coward’s basest, meanest part—I will not act it now.”

Sick and exhausted he reached his home. Mrs. Woodford looked anxiously at his pale and agitated countenance : she did not venture to address him, and held back her child, as the boy pressed forward to greet him. Tarleton stretched out his hand towards him ; and the poor boy’s innocent caresses, the quick energy of his young ideas calmed, more than any thing else could have done, the tumult of conflicting emotions which had well nigh subdued him.

CHAPTER IX.

MEANWHILE our hero's legal proceedings went on but badly. After a most rigid scrutiny of the document, the signatures of Sir Edward Forrester, and of the deceased clerk, who was one of the subscribing witnesses, were pronounced authentic; and Sparkes, when required to do so, willingly, and without hesitation, gave his history of the affair.

Knowing, as he did, by private means, the grounds upon which the opposing party impugned the will, he stated, of his own accord, "that at the time it was made, Sir Edward Forrester had declared to him, and to Tarleton, who was also present, that he was resolved never to admit having done so old-fashioned a thing as make his will:—he had enjoined them both to secrecy; and it was this wish for concealment, which had led Sir

Edward to employ him rather than the solicitor who managed his estates."

When asked if the deceased had explained the reasons which induced him to do an act so repugnant to his feelings, Sparkes readily answered. "Yes: the Baronet had told him that Tarleton was the only real friend he ever had; that he had saved his life when they were abroad together;"—this was the fact,—
"and, that if he, Sir Edward, was to break his neck in a fox-chase, he should be devilish sorry that his money should go to a pack of women, for whom he did not care five farthings."

All this appeared clear and consistent; and, although coming from a person whose want of character was notorious, could not be impugned. The most minute examination of the will,—every line and every word,—was again and again critically made; but by that strange combination of circumstances, which so often, in the affairs of real life, exceed probability, during the whole of the investigation, no attention was given to the only point on which detection was possible: and

whilst the written characters were elaborately scrutinized, not a single glance was given to the paper on which they were inscribed.

In the end, Hardinge's legal advisers came unanimously to the conclusion, that the will could not be set aside ; a conclusion, the more annoying, because the impression remained unshaken, that fraud had been practised, although it had escaped detection.

The zeal and industry with which Hardinge laboured in his sister's behalf, did not prevent his passing many social hours with Drummond, greatly to the enjoyment of both. Drummond had not forgotten the discussion between them on the dangers of retirement ; he had also, from some source or other, obtained no inconsiderable knowledge of the amatory difficulties, in which his old friend was placed ; and he was little disposed to let him off quietly on the subject.

At one of their tête-à-tête evening meetings, after having, by a good deal of sportive cross-examination, made himself master of the state of affairs at East Leighton, he exclaimed, " Hardinge, you have exceeded my expecta-

tions, and my fears. I knew that you were a doomed man, ; but I never expected that you would have been attacked by all the three Graces at once. It is wonderful," he added, with a mock solemnity of tone,—“it is absolutely wonderful—such a crowd of conquests! —But how you are to extricate yourself from your triangular difficulties, surpasses my conception. ‘Triangular difficulties,’” he repeated, after a pause: “triangles—it is a nicely selected word, and I am proud of it: but, to soldiers,—volunteers, as you and I have been,—valiant members of the ‘*Devil’s Own*,’—the term has an approximation to military punishments which is not agreeable. Still, what are a few thousand lashes, compared to the deathless glory of a triple conquest !

‘Cæsar himself could never say
He got *three* vict’ries in a day.’”

“I expected all this,” said Hardinge, in a resigned tone, “ever since Murray was at Rylands. I knew that my old friend, the Earl, a humourist by profession, would deluge him with all manner of absurdities for the especial purpose of his conveying them to you.”

“ Absurdities ?” cried Drummond , “ are the charges true or false ?—Yes or no ?—Are you or are you not, at this very moment, the happy, the guilty possessor of three fair ladies’ hearts, any one of which would be cheap if purchased with a crown ?”

“ No, Drummond, not of one ;—not of one.”

“ Well, let us go into the matter categorically, and with judicial composure. First, there is Miss Isabella Chamberlayne ; does she, or does she not, adore you ? Guilty man, speak !”

Hardinge laughed. “ No, she does not. You have seen her, and you know exactly the sort of person she is : a more gentle, a kinder-hearted, better creature does not exist. She has her weak point, and has had it any time these thirty years. She has that susceptibility of heart which inclines her to make a fool of herself with every single man, who happens to be living near her. I have that advantage at present ; my glory and my conquest extend so far, and no further.” Drummond shook his head doubtfully. “ It is no new affair, my good

friend," continued Hardinge. "For a long period of time, she regularly honoured me with her affections twice a-year during the hunting and shooting seasons. At last Mr. Middleton's romantic curate fairly beat me out of the field by reading Spenser with her before breakfast. Nay, besides a shade of fondness for one or two of poor Morrison's successors, there was your friend Dr. Henderson at Wells: he would have had her all to himself if Lord Kennis's gout had been continuous. Why Drummond, you have yourself heard all this from poor Lady Kennis."

"Number two," said Drummond: "Miss Mackenzie, — Miss Jane Mackenzie. What say you here?"

"Totally, absolutely, and entirely guiltless: not one iota of love in the case. Miss Mackenzie is an agreeable sensible young woman; but stricken to the heart by the blow which destroyed all her visions of happiness at Trafalgar. I greatly doubt whether she will ever again feel what love is. At all events, I am quite certain she does not feel it for me. Why, man, I am fifteen years her senior!"

“ Report says otherwise, my too modest friend ;—you are believed to have vanquished without attacking.”

“ Report was never more mistaken. My success with Miss Mackenzie exists only in the imagination, or rather I should say in the wishes, of my politic old housekeeper, and my saucy niece who aids and abets her in every thing ; but I understand their machinations perfectly.”

“ Well, Hardinge, and the third lady,—the fair widow?—what account can you give of yourself with reference to her ?”

“ Why, as to the fair widow, I hardly know what to say. I know she is not popular amongst us at East Leighton ; but, on my conscience, I think the prejudice against her is unfounded. She is lively, and as good-natured a creature as I ever met with. I do not think she has a delight in the world equal to that of seeing people happy around her ;—testy, I admit ; but what woman of quick feelings is not ? Women’s minds are like India rubber, very soft and pliant, but if touched quickly,

everything rebounds from them, and somewhat sharply perhaps."

"And this gay widow, is she as beautiful as good?"

"She is not a Mrs. Siddons, nor a Madame Recamier; but she is an animated, attractive, dangerous little creature for an idle old bachelor like me to come near."

"Ho! ho! you admit there is danger."

"There must always be danger," answered Hardinge, "when a man lives in the country, and has nothing to do. You were right there, Drummond. Idleness is the surest possible thing to get a man into a scrape, who is too old to consider that all the happiness of life consists in a pack of fox-hounds and a double-barrelled gun. Yes, Drummond, you and our school-copy are the concentrations of wisdom."

"My poor, poor friend," said Drummond sighing compassionately; "all your hopes of safety must rest with that shrewd old house-keeper of yours. For her own sake she will preserve you from destruction, if possible; but I greatly doubt her power."

“ No,” said Hardinge, “ I absolve her of all selfish motives ; there is not a grain of it in her nature : but I know she thinks, and faith so do I, that I am happier as I am. The sly old creature,” he continued, laughing, “ her impertinence is positively beyond endurance. She treats me as if I were a spoilt child of seven years old, who must always have something to do to keep it out of mischief : she brings all the ragamuffins in the parish to me with their disputes to occupy my time ; and the other day she asked me if I had not better think about making another set of walks ; and she could hardly refrain from laughing whilst she said so. I could almost make up my mind to marry for the express purpose of vexing her, were it not for the adage.”

For some time Drummond made no reply, being employed in ascertaining the exact centre of gravity of his dessert-fork. At length he said : “ Unhappy man, your case is decided upon. Go back to the place whence you came, and prepare yourself to undergo your sentence.”

“ And what is my sentence ?”

“ We have not a shadow of doubt upon our minds,” said Drummond with judicial gravity, “ as to the case ; but the ends of justice will best be answered by your remaining for the present ignorant of the exact nature of your punishment : we do not conceive that the period of your suspense will be long. Go, unhappy and thrice guilty man, and may Heaven support you under your approaching sufferings.”

“ This is most unfair and illegal,” exclaimed Hardinge. “ You affect to find me guilty on my own evidence, which proves me spotless of blame ; and you refuse to tell me what my punishment will be : abominable, unheard-of tyranny !”

“ Perfectly regular and correct,” said Drummond. “ Take my word for it, my poor friend, that in these cases the sentence of condemnation is pronounced long, very long before the nature and the extent of the punishment is known, or even guessed at.”

“ The extent of the punishment, yes ; but in which of the three directions do you suppose it will come ? on what point of the triangle am I to be impaled ?”

“ Ah, true,” said Drummond ; “ the triangles, the triangles. I see the uncomfortable idea hangs upon you. I was wrong, very wrong, to suggest it. Come, my poor friend, we shall just be in time for Kemble’s third act of Othello. The picture of the calm happiness of married life will raise your spirits.”

It was on the same day that this long investigation of Hardinge’s delinquencies took place, that his fair niece received a letter from him, announcing his return to East Leighton in two or three days, as all attempt at further opposition to the will had been pronounced hopeless. The news of her uncle’s return was great joy to her, for his absence had been extended from days to weeks ; and although her time had been agreeably divided between her kind friends at the Castle and at Mrs. Mackenzie’s humble cottage, still she sighed for his society and support. Judge Hannah’s gloomy anticipations of the pining away of her young charge, which perhaps she had more strongly coloured in her parting admonition to Lionel than she would otherwise have done, in order to produce a salutary effect upon him, appeared

to be erroneous. Clara was no longer the gay, thoughtless, lively creature she had been; but the violent depression of her feelings, which had so greatly alarmed her friends, had gradually been succeeded by tranquillity and resignation. Two distinct causes conduced to this. She well knew that the happiness, nay, the lives, of her mother and Caroline were wrapt up in hers. She felt that any selfish indulgence in grief was unjust, ungenerous towards them, and with the resolute firmness of her character she determined bravely to resist and conquer the fears and anxiety which oppressed her. Grief, however poignant, however well-founded, like all other diseases of the mind, is augmented by indulgence, and becomes less if firmly resisted.

Another, and we will not assert that it was not the still more powerful, cause of her renewed tranquillity was the letter after letter in quick succession which she received from her absent lover. In these young Walsingham transmitted no certificates of cowardice from his commanding officer for the consolation of his bride-elect, but the general tone of his long

epistles, full of animation and spirit as they were, convinced her that her image was unceasingly before his eyes, that her happiness influenced all his conduct, and that he was no longer the thoughtless, intemperate desperado that he had formerly been.

Lord Kennis had his despatches also, and some of them from the most illustrious warriors of the age. In these Viscount Walsingham was spoken of in terms of unbounded praise, as promising to become one of the best and steadiest officers in the service, and calculated in no common degree to do honour to its very highest ranks. All this was balm to Clara's heart, and Judge Hannah, although she had still her own misgivings, uttered no word to shake her young mistress's increasing hopes.

At the very time that Hardinge's announcement of his return reached Clara she was concluding one of those interminable letters crossed and re-crossed, which young ladies delight to pen, and which their seniors tremble to peruse. It was filled to overflowing with long extracts from her Spanish despatches, and with all the

news of the East Leighton world ; whilst more than one paragraph was inserted touching with judicious lightness on Jane Mackenzie's virtues and good gifts.

Hannah, who as a matter of course came into the oak parlour to hear the news, was highly indignant at the discontinuance of the legal proceedings. " I wish I was up among them, Miss Clara," she said ; " 'tis the worst thing there is about lawyers, they think of nothing but their rules, and their forms, and their regularities ; they never can go straight-forward to what they want."

Clara smiled. " You know, my dear Hannah, that my uncle has taken the very best advice in the kingdom, and you know how clever he is himself: be assured that every thing has been done that can be done."

" Yes, Ma'am, according to the courts and the rules. Lord bless you, I have seen it all and know it. There they go on talking, and writing, and moving, and filing, and stamping, and referring, when ten words of common sense would settle it all at once ; it makes me sick, Ma'am. Why doesn't my master make

that Tarleton—I saw what he was when he was talking to you at the Abbey—why doesn't he make him go with him to the place where they keep the will? I would, Ma'am; I would make him go with me; and I would make him read it to me, word by word, from the beginning to the end, names and all; and I would look at his thin sharp face as if I were going to look him through: and when he came to the false parts, let him do his very best he would not be able to keep up his looks and his voice too; and then I'd pin him, and make him confess."

"I suppose, Hannah, that my uncle has no power to compel him to do this: at all events it cannot be doubted that the very best course has been pursued."

"Compel him! no, perhaps not; but if he refuses to go, does not that speak against him? Miss Clara, the will's a false will; I'll lay my life upon it. That Sir Edward was not the man to give away his money, alive or dead: he hadn't heart enough to do it. His will, if he had ever made one, would have been all about himself, and his own funeral, and family non-

sense. Well, and if every body knows this, why can't they prove it? A set of Indian savages would, because they have no forms of court: and I would, Miss Clara—yes, I would, though you do laugh—if I could once get amongst them, and have my own way.”

“It is absolutely necessary,” said Clara, “that affairs of this sort should be conducted according to the law.”

“More's the pity, Ma'am. I've seen so much of law and lawyers too, that I'm sick of them. Let any body who has a grain of sense in his head go into the courts, and look at all the benches stuffed full of them; and he'll soon see what chance the poor creatures who are throwing away their money by handfuls have of getting justice done them. Lawyers! why the young ones think of nothing but whether their wigs sit straight, and how to throw bits of paper with their jokes upon them without the judge seeing them; and the old ones are half their time taken up with quarrelling with one another, and reading three or four briefs at once; and when they do condescend to think about their clients, then there come the

forms, and the rules, and they won't see a thing though it stares them right in the face, because it's contrary to practice. I'm sick of the entire concern, Miss Clara; how can one help it, when one knows that they are all letting Miss Caroline and you be cheated in this way."

Clara ventured to hint at the possibility of difference between the *existence* and the *proof* of guilt, and added, "I thought, Hannah, that you considered my uncle as the very perfection of legal wisdom."

"Well, so I do to be sure; but even he was always too full of his formalities, and gentilities, and what-nots. He was hampered up in them just like—like a—" She left the sentence unfinished.

Clara directed and sealed her letter; and the old Judge, receiving it with something approaching to a groan, took her departure: but in a few minutes, and when Clara having put on her bonnet and shawl was on the point of setting out to visit Jane Mackenzie, the old lady again made her appearance with the letter in her hand. "Miss Clara," she said, "I know I am an old fool, and that my master will say

so ; but do, my dear child, open your letter again, and tell him what I say. It is borne in upon me, Ma'am, it is ; and I can't get it out of my head that good will come of it. Just write down the very words that I shall tell you. Do now, there's a sweet tempered darling as you are."

Clara knew that the paper was already more than full, and paused as to acceding to the old housekeeper's request : but there was a look of such intense earnestness in her face that she good-naturedly gave way. With the small flame of her wax-taper she skilfully unsealed her epistle ; and between the lines in a reversed direction she wrote in her smallest but most distinct characters as follows :—

“ MY DEAR UNCLE,

“ I unseal my letter at Judge Hannah's vehement request ; and I write under her precise dictation. She says, ‘ that she knows you will call her an old fool for meddling with matters that do not concern her ; but she has been right before now when wiser heads have been wrong. She asks your pardon, and sends her duty, and begs you will make Mr. Tarleton

go with you to the place where they keep the will ; and make him read it to you from end to end, and face to face, names and dates and all. You are to look at him, as you used to do at the witnesses, and see when the paper trembles in his hands, and make him go over that part again and again : and if his looks stand it, his voice won't : and you can get him to the very point if you but try straight-forward, and don't go twenty miles round for form's sake. She'd risk her life that the will is false ; and that she'd find it out if she could but once get among you all.' The whole of this, my dear uncle, is verbatim ; and I am to wind it up by again begging your pardon in her name."

CHAPTER X.

CLARA's epistle reached Hardinge on the morning of the very day which he had fixed for his departure from town by the mail. He read its closely written pages with great interest; and some parts a second time aloud to his friend Drummond, who was breakfasting with him, but without perceiving the thread of interlineation which formed its postscript: nor did he detect it until he was in the very act of folding up the paper. He perused it with greater attention than the fair pen-woman had expected; a second time he read it, and then aloud to his friend.

“What say you to the suggestion, Drummond? the caveat is still in force.”

“It would be a singularity of practice certainly,” replied his friend. “The old fox is like all other nostrum-mongers, all other depositors of salt on birds' tails: she never tells you by

what means you are to bring her plans of operation into effect. Mr. Philip Tarleton, from your account of him, is far too shrewd a personage to expose himself unnecessarily to any risk of detection.

“ True,” answered Hardinge ; “ but he is proud ; and may dread the obloquy that a refusal would bring upon him.”

“ What obloquy ? the request is so unusual, so unheard of, nay is so impertinent, that his giving you a refusal in terms however rude, would expose him to no censure. What a charming bear-garden Doctors’ Commons would be converted into, if all the contending parties were to meet there, and have their squabbles out upon the spot. Such a procedure is unheard of.”

“ I’ll make the experiment,” said Hardinge, after a pause ; “ I will not scout the advice because it comes from an old housewife.—And as to precedents and forms—why faith, Drummond, the five or six months that my wig and I have been unacquainted have not increased my veneration for them.”

The terms in which so unusual a request

should be made were a matter of some difficulty. Our hero knew he had no right to demand the interview; and he could not bring himself to ask it as a favour. After some consideration he wrote as follows:—

“ Mr. Hardinge has to inform Mr. Tarleton that he has determined again personally to examine the document, which purports to be the will of the late Sir Edward Forrester. He would be glad if Mr. Tarleton’s convenience should enable him to meet him to-day at Doctors’ Commons, that he may be present whilst the inspection is made. Mr. Hardinge is aware that the proposition he makes is irregular; and that he has no power to constrain Mr. Tarleton to meet him. But if Mr. Tarleton be convinced of the validity of the instrument, and Mr. Hardinge cannot suppose otherwise without impugning his honour and integrity, he conceives that he will be desirous the business should be sifted to the uttermost.”

The place of meeting, a coffee house in the neighbourhood, and the hour were then stated.

“ He ’ll never come,” said Drummond, as he read the note.

“ He will : his pride will bring him. I have seen the man, Drummond ; you have not.”

The note filled Tarleton with alarm. From Sparkes, whose secret intelligence was uniformly maintained, he had learnt that all proceedings against the will would be abandoned ; and confidently therefore had he hoped that the danger was overpast. It now appeared that from some cause or other a new scrutiny was to be instituted. Feeling that he had no right to decide on so important a point without communicating with his accomplice, he sought out the attorney and placed the note in his hands.

Sparkes at once protested against his granting the meeting. Such a request he said was never heard of : it would be madness to go.

“ My refusal,” said Tarleton ; “ will convince them of my guilt.”

“ Well, what of that ? they know that as well as you can tell them : but knowing there is guilt, and being able to prove it, are two devilish different things. I tell you, Tarleton, you shan’t go. I won’t suffer it.”

Tarleton, with the cool tone of superiority

which he always assumed towards this man, and always with success; without deigning to contest the point, said: "I shall go, Mr. Sparkes—I cannot increase our danger, and I may greatly lessen it. Whether I accompany this Hardinge or not, it is certain he will inspect the will. My refusing to go with him will add to his suspicion, and make his investigation the more rigid. My presence, also, as I shall conduct the interview, will make him less at his ease than were he alone; will give him less opportunity minutely to examine the accursed paper."

"Something in that!" cried Sparkes;—"I will go with you."

"No, Sir, you will not. I know that I can trust to my own steadiness of nerve and self-possession—but I have not the same confidence in your's. I must go alone."

"Upon my soul, Mr. Philip Tarleton, you carry the thing off with a tolerably high hand, I think, considering that it is you who have got me into this infernal scrape; and that it is a pretty even bet that we shall both be dangling for it together in front of the Old Bailey before

six weeks are over. D—mme, Sir, I won't endure it."

"I repeat, Sir," said Tarleton, deliberately, "that I must go alone. Were you to accompany me, it would lead to some other person going with him; the danger would be increased two-fold; and the object I have in view defeated. Your common sense must convince you of this."

"The old story," said Sparkes, doggedly; "over-refining and finessing until you get inside the Stone Jug, and then all's up. Let them once nab us, and we are dead men, if we had as many lives as there are pound notes in the Bank of England."

"Well, Sir," said Tarleton, "decide the matter for both yourself and me. I will never give you the right to say that you owe your fate to my obstinacy. I am ready to go on with the affair, or to be off at once for Liverpool. I put the decision into your hands."

Ten thousand pounds so nearly within his grasp, were too powerful a temptation for such a man as Sparkes to resist. "No, d—n it,

not yet," he exclaimed; "not yet—we can sail closer to the wind, and slip off cleverly still. Well, my dear fellow, I know you have good stuff in you. I haven't forgot that ticklish little affair at Maidstone; and the credit you got from all the knowing ones, for the devilish cool style in which you carried it through. Tell this meddling fellow that you will meet him; but remember he is a lawyer, and a cursed keen one too. Let him have no one with him, there you are right,—it will be important. I will be at Drake's waiting for you."

They parted; and at the appointed time Tarleton confronted our hero at the Chapter Coffee-house. Drummond was with him; and as he approached them he cast a searching glance at both their countenances.

"Your note, Mr. Hardinge," he said, in a tone of proud civility, "did not express your intention of bringing any professional assistance with you. I come here alone, to meet you only. I do so in direct opposition to the opinion of my legal advisers; but knowing my own integrity I could not endure, by refusing

your most singular request, to appear unwilling to afford you every information in my power. Your friend, of course, and every one else, can, if they please, examine Sir Edward Forrester's will: let them do so:—but I object to any person being present at our conference. I will not risk the injury to my character which may result from any expression of mine being incorrectly reported, unintentionally perhaps, by a witness whose mis-statements I should not be in a condition to disprove.”

“Drummond,” said Hardinge, “I will meet you in an hour's time in the Temple Gardens. Mr. Tarleton, I am ready to attend you alone. I have no wish to place you in any situation of disadvantage.”

They proceeded together in silence to the gloomy chambers, in which, in ten thousand different versions, the one grand lesson of the vanity of all earthly riches would be so powerfully taught, were it not that the minds of all the students are invariably directed to the other side of the question.

“Come to see the same will again, Sir?” was the yawning clerk's first salutation to

Tarleton; and the momentous paper was forthwith placed in his hands. He opened it, an action which civility rendered natural, and handed it to Hardinge, who scanned his features accurately as he did so; but no agitation, no anxiety could be detected. He came prepared for the task, and throughout the whole interview his nerves were iron. Hardinge, with slow precision, read the will, clause by clause, in a half audible tone; and as, whilst doing so, he addressed several questions to Tarleton, he watched him with a keen eye. No grounds for suspicion could be detected; his answers were frank and explicit; and his look and manner composed. Hardinge referred back to one sentence, the wording of which was ambiguous.

“This will,” said he, “having been prepared by a solicitor, it appears to me singular that so unprofessional a mode of expression should have been used. If you read the sentence, Sir, you will perceive to what I allude.”

Tarleton took the paper; and whilst he looked at the passage, Hardinge watched him

narrowly. No confusion, no alarm could be detected; the paper did not tremble in his hand. He read the sentence aloud; "The meaning appears to me, Sir," said he, "sufficiently obvious. I know little of legal niceties of expression."

"The next clause, Sir," said Hardinge, "the next clause—it bears upon the point."

Tarleton perceived his adversary's drift, and smiled sarcastically. "It will probably be satisfactory to you, Mr. Hardinge, if I read aloud the whole of the will. Shall I do so?"

Our hero bowed his assent; and in a slow deliberate tone, no look, no gesture, indicating the slightest agitation, he read every word of the instrument from beginning to end, even to the dates and signatures; and then, with the skilfully assumed air of an honest man, who knows he has been unjustly suspected, returned it open into Hardinge's hand. The acting was so masterly, so sustained; there was so much of tranquil frankness, that for the first time Hardinge's opinion vacillated, and he was almost convinced that no fraud existed. A feeling of self-reproach coloured his cheek, as

folding up the paper he threw it on the desk before which they were standing ; and willing to avoid the awkwardness of abruptly terminating the interview, he made some remark of little importance regarding it.

Tarleton at a single glance perceived that it lay with the dreaded mark uppermost ; and to his eye the faint white shade upon the paper appeared as strongly defined, as impossible to escape the sight, as if it had been stamped in ink. He saw that Hardinge's eye dwelt upon it. The danger was too imminent to be endured. To attempt to move the paper had danger in it also. Rapidly, but deliberately, he weighed the two, and decided that the existing peril was the greatest. He took up the will, opened it, looked at one or two passages, and laid it down unfolded upon the desk.

The decision was fatal ; for although the action was so tranquilly performed, and with so much apparent carelessness as to excite no suspicion, there was in Tarleton's tone and manner as he replied to Hardinge's remarks, a degree of forced attention which their importance did not call for. The practised acute-

ness of the lawyer at once connected the two things. He took up the paper, folded it, and in that state examined it minutely. At once he detected the dated mark, and then it appeared inconceivable to him that it should not have been perceived before. He changed colour, and his lip quivered. He felt that at once, in one second of time, the life of a fellow creature, his destiny in this world, perhaps in the next also, had been irrevocably placed in his hands ; and he shuddered at the responsibility.

Tarleton perceived that he was detected : but sudden and severe as was the trial, his self-possession did not give way. He and Hardinge quitted the building together, and after a few words of formal civility, took each his different path.

Had any one of the busy passing crowd noticed their parting, the perfect tranquillity of the one, the agitated depression of the other, how little could he have divined the relation in which they then stood towards each other !

The ill-fated young man with a quick step sought the place where his accomplice awaited

him. As soon as they were alone, and that the necessity of constraint was over, he felt faint and exhausted by the sustained effort he had made ; and it was with difficulty that he could reply to the eager questions of the attorney.

“ It is discovered,” he said at length. “ No weakness of mine has betrayed us. The supercilious fool had finished his scrutiny—nay, I am certain that I had changed his opinion of the affair ; and, damned luck ! at the very last moment of our interview, when every thing was over, his eye caught the accursed mark.”

Tarleton’s statement ended here ; he could not bring himself to repeat his own imprudence—his over-caution rather. At first Sparkes was silent. He then broke out into abusive violence, which Tarleton neither answered nor regarded. The pettifogging scoundrel, his first burst of disappointment and rage being over, became silent, and weighed the possibility of securing his own safety by betraying his employer ; but practised as he was in all the routine of crime, he perceived at once that direct and better evidence would render his

valueless. With the callous indifference, which in such men assumes the place of fortitude, he soon resumed his usual coarse bold manner. "Well," he said, "it can't be helped, Phil Tarleton. Ten to one they would have poked it out without our assistance. We must be off to Exeter."

"To Exeter?"

"Yes, it is the safest road to Liverpool. There is one point though, and it's the only one I care a curse for now. Does that meddling fool guess that you know he has found out the trick?"

"I am certain he does not," answered Tarleton. "He was agitated, and shook like an aspen leaf. I know that I was perfectly unmoved."

"That's a point gained," said Sparkes. "Let me see then. We must put on sailors' clothes and be off by the night coach."

"At what hour?" asked Tarleton.

"At eight to-night."

"Why risk the delay; why not depart instantly?"

"For one or two good reasons, my fine fel-

low. We must raise the wind ; and that's not done in a moment. There's no coach before eight ; and there are other things to be attended to."—Here Sparkes, whose devotion to the fair sex was unbounded, heaved something like a sigh. " There's no need of hurrying," he continued : " I know, as well as I do my A. B. C. what they will do." He detailed the process. " We are safe for the next six hours. Phil, you shall go and buy our new toggery, and we must"—he looked at himself in the glass—" we must disguise our faces, and these delicate hands of ours must not show themselves more than can be helped. Yes," he said, still looking at himself with great complacency, whilst his mind wandered to the reigning lady of his affections ; " yes, it will break the poor little devil's heart. I'll have her over in two months."

The gross vanity of the man at such a moment, annoyed Tarleton.

" Mr. Sparkes," he said, sternly, " you may be more profitably employed than in such absurd trifling as this."

The villain laughed. " Mr. Sparkes ? Mr.

Sparkes still, is it? Well then, *Mister* Tarleton, let me say, that considering how we stand, and what has brought us to it, I think you are about as cool and consequential a gentleman as a man could wish to meet with.—It is devilish odd if we arn't equal now."

"No, Sir, no pressure of difficulty or danger can ever bring us to an equality—can ever make us alike in anything."

"Equality! we shall be pretty much on an equality I take it, when we are dangling side by side, as we shall be, if we go on snarling now. Come, Phil Tarleton, we'll have no squabbling: it can do me devilish little good; and would settle you at once. But we are alike in this at least; that we both stand up like men against this accident;—you, with your cold pompous philosophy, that you are so proud of;—and I, with plain good sense and worldly wisdom, which beat to chinks all the schools that ever jabbered:—yes, and will get us through, if anything can."

After arranging their next time and place of meeting, they parted; and strange as it may appear, the new peril which had fallen upon

Tarleton, when the first tumult of alarm was over, lessened the mental anguish, the corroding grief, which had before oppressed him. The hated image of Sir Edward Forrester, his dying look of accusation, which, as the feverish agitation of his mind increased, became hour after hour more unendurable, no longer haunted his view : the perpetual repetition of the word, ‘murderer,’ which his lips would continue to frame ever against his will, ceased under the new excitement ; and the active preparations he was now compelled to make, were a relief and solace to him.

In the meantime, Hardinge had rejoined his friend in the Temple Gardens.

“Forged,” cried Drummond,—“a thousand guineas to one.—I know it, Charles Hardinge, by your look.”

Hardinge briefly related what had taken place ; and then giving way to the feelings which oppressed him, he exclaimed : “Irrational and sanguinary law, as unjust as it is ineffectual ! and those who avail themselves of it participate in its guilt.”

“I grant,” said Drummond, “that the ex-

isting law is absurd and cruel ; but no blame can rest with you. You let this press upon you too deeply."

"No, Drummond, I do not. It presses no deeper upon me than it would upon you, were you placed as I am."

"You cannot hesitate as to the step which it is your duty to take?"

"I do not:—and it is the certainty of what I am called upon to do, which bears so heavily upon me."

"You will, I presume," said Drummond, "go at once to your solicitors?"

"No," answered Hardinge; "as the task must be performed, I will not do it ineffectually. I shall myself go this instant to Bow Street."

Drummond raised his eyebrows. "Here is another anomaly of practice," he said.

"Another instance," answered Hardinge, "where etiquette shall give way to prudence and common sense."

This promptitude overthrew at once all Sparkes's arrangements. In less than two hours, the officers of justice found him at one

of his accustomed haunts. The mixture of frivolity and callous disregard of life which marked his character, was shewn in the vanity of his adieux to the alarmed object of his affections, and in the excess of care which he evinced to obtain around him in his prison, without a day's delay, all the means of luxury and self-indulgence.

As quickly, and with as little difficulty, the blood-hounds of the law seized on Philip Tarleton. He had but just returned to his lodgings, when they obtained admission to the house, and made him their prisoner. He had prepared himself for the event, and bore it with composure: but the surprise and terror of his young son, whose childish attachment to him had been of late his only solace, gave him a bitter pang: and the look of intense sorrow which the depressed, degraded, and care-worn Emma Woodford cast upon him as he was hurried from the house, proved to him that woman's love, though tried by contempt, ill-usage, and neglect, can still outlive them all.

A few hours sufficed for the usual processes

of the law to be completed ; and the two prisoners were taken together to Newgate. Sparkes, who affected to be no whit cast down by what he termed '*the accident*,' gaily sprung out of the coach, and entered the gloomy walls with a quick step, through the usual crowd of gaping spectators. Tarleton, although exposure to the gaze of the mob was hateful to him, paused at the threshold. He turned round, and with deliberate attention gazed at the street, its busy crowd, the neighbouring church, and all the objects within his range of view ; and then with a half-grave, half-careless expression on his features, muttered as he entered the narrow door ;—" And here then it ends !"

Hardinge, with the active energy which he could display when the occasion demanded it, went down the same night to Dover. The testimony of the paper-maker was explicit, that not a single sheet of paper bearing his name and the date of 1810, had been made prior to the commencement of that year ; and the books of the wire-worker showed the

exact day on which the frames had been delivered by him.

The evidence was therefore complete and unshakeable : and severely as the laws against forgery were then administered, not a doubt could remain as to the conviction and death of the two unhappy men.

CHAPTER XI.

AFTER the guilty and agitating scenes upon which we have been constrained to dwell, it is cheering to be at length enabled to return to the real subject matter of our volumes. And we trust that our fair and gentle Patronesses, countless and sparkling as the stars of heaven, will also hail with pleasure our renewed attempt to paint with a faithful hand the noblest, the purest, the softest, the most sublime of human passions—LOVE—as displayed in the female bosom when matured by experience and age. But alas! the pictures we shall have to present to them will not be unmixed delineations of softness and affection.

If ‘the course of true love never did run smooth,’ how much more broken and disturbed must its waters have been, when three, or at

least two separate torrents, were struggling and contending in the self-same channel.

During the long absence of our hero, an important change had taken place in the conduct of Mrs. Dobson and Miss Chamberlayne towards each other. Whilst he was present, whatever their inward feelings might have been, no diminution had taken place in their external demonstrations of friendship. Still, as kindly as ever, did they embrace.—‘Anna dear,’ and ‘my dear Bella,’ were still, as ever, their fond appellations. But no sooner had he departed, than a rapid, though gradual declination in the terms of endearment took place. ‘Anna dear’ was shortened down to ‘Anna,’ nay, to the still harsher sound of ‘Ann.’ ‘My dear Bella,’ lost two-thirds of its tenderness, and became plain ‘Bella,’ and that again cooled down into ‘Isabella.’ Then ‘Miss Chamberlayne’ and ‘Mrs. Dobson’ followed ;—then ‘Ma’am’; and at length no courteous appellative at all smoothed the asperities of their conversation. The early attachment of their school-days, the ardent affection of youth, the more matured, and

more rational, and strongly built friendship of later years, all gave way before one overwhelming passion: and it was absolutely inconceivable how intensely they hated each other.

How strange, how unfortunate, that the mere similarity of pursuit should produce such fatal effects! should convert two of the master-pieces of nature into—we scarcely know what term to use,—into specimens of ungovernable animation.

It will easily be supposed that the rival ladies seldom called on each other; but the visits of both of them to the Manor-house were frequent; and on one or two occasions they had met there, somewhat to Clara's dismay, but still more to her amusement. Hitherto, however, nothing had taken place beyond a little brisk, lady-like skirmishing, and a few variations of opinion, clearly, but decorously expressed. But on the third occasion of their meeting in the oak parlour, things, we lament to say, proceeded to much greater lengths; almost to the fearful extent of personal conflict.

It was known throughout the village that Hardinge would soon return from his long protracted visit to London ; and the chief object of both the ladies in visiting Clara was to ascertain, as exactly as possible, the precise hour of his arrival. It was, perhaps, this circumstance which gave an extra degree of acerbity to their greetings, and led to a sustained system of mutual contradiction and retort.

The little widow, the last comer of the two, was scarcely seated when Miss Chamberlayne resumed some speech she was making to Clara about ‘the happiness she enjoyed in her tranquil Bower.’

“ Bower !” exclaimed Mrs. Dobson, with a fling ; “ how monstrous odd it is that all the people will keep on calling that odd little place of yours ‘ CLEAVER LODGE !’ ’Tis really quite provoking, when one knows how you hate it.”

“ Nobody does so, Ma’am,” said Miss Chamberlayne, with great stateliness. “ Nobody belonging to the place,—no properly constituted individual.”

‘ Yes, they do,” retorted Mrs. Dobson ; “ at

least if you call the butcher's boy a properly constituted individual. He passed Wilkinson and me just now ; and the Doctor asked him where he was going to take the scrag of mutton to ; and the boy said to Cleaver Lodge, for *Mrs.* Chamberlayne.

The word *Mrs.* was strongly accented; and the sudden colour in the fair spinster's face shamed every rose, from the Maiden's blush to the Tuscany. She turned round, and was about to hurl some 'brave defiance' at her friend; but she checked herself; and in a tremulous accent, addressing Clara, explained that she was going to have mutton broth for a slight cold; "which, thank Heaven, my dear young friend, and my propriety and temperance, is almost the only sort of illness *I* ever have."

Here the pronoun was the word selected for distinct emphasis.

Clara prudently started some other subject ; but while she and Mrs. Dobson were discussing it, our maiden heroine was revolving in her mind how best to avenge herself for the double insult she had sustained. The scrag of mutton,

but ten times more the *Mrs.*, stuck in her throat. She thought of all the subjects which would be most displeasing to her friend, Birmingham, Wokey Hole, Lord Kennis's delinquencies, and various others; but she knew the most unendurable of all was any allusion to the fact, undeniable as it was, that they had once been school-fellows; and she now sat anxiously considering how best to give the conversation an academic turn. Quickness of repartee was not Miss Chamberlayne's forte; and she was much puzzled to effect an opening. At length she exclaimed, somewhat abruptly,—

“Mutton! Do you remember, Anna dear,”—the words of ancient fondness would, she thought, add venom to the impending blow,—“do you remember, Anna dear, when you and I were at school together, how sulky you used to be if our governess would not let you have three helpings when it was legs of mutton?”

“No!” answered the widow sharply, “I remember nothing about it:—how should I? I was a mere baby, Miss Forrester, when she was a grown up woman. It was a great comfort to me, poor little thing that I was, to have

some one to look up to. Don't you remember, Miss Chamberlayne,—Isabella,—what a little, little thing I was when I first came to school?"

"Oh, yes; you were always very, very little," cried Miss Chamberlayne, with a sharp clear note of triumph; "very, very short, always!"

There was a pause; and both the disputants took breath. Mrs. Dobson, apparently unwilling to make a direct attack upon the elated spinster, determined to annoy her by an indiscriminate censure of the entire parish. Turning to Clara, she said:

"I never knew such extortioners since I was born, as all the people here are: the butcher is a perfect rogue; and there is that old cheat of a washerwoman, whom Miss Chamberlayne recommended to me, Sally Evans,—her charges are higher than the Cheltenham ones—and such horrid getting up! I wish to goodness I had known the woman had got a pack of dirty children; I would never have employed her. My collars and handkerchiefs look as if all her brats had been trampling upon them. It

is quite impossible she can ever have washed for genteel people."

"She has washed for me, Ma'am, for five years," said Miss Chamberlayne with solemnity; "and she is an honest, hard-working good woman. My bills are as reasonable as bills can be."

"*Your* bills!" cried the widow, with a contemptuous toss of the head, and a general glance over her own multitudinous adornments of frill and lace. "*Your* bills!—perhaps they may."

"Yes, Ma'am, *my* bills," cried Miss Chamberlayne, with a decision of tone and manner, which made Clara start. "*My* bills, Ma'am."

We must proceed with this scene, painful though it be to do so, most painful, most humiliating. There are many who still remember when two gallant officers, two attached friends, sacrificed friendship and life in a silly squabble about a worthless dog. But ten times more unimportant, more trivial, more ignoble, was the subject, the ostensible subject at least, which effaced all remaining traces, all outward show

of a friendship, the intenseness of which, like its duration, was known only to themselves. Willingly would we drop the curtain over the painful scene: but we must not do so: the portraits which it is our aim to draw, the moral lessons which we desire to teach, would want the precise distinctive force which scrupulous adherence to fact alone can give them.

Mrs. Dobson did not address herself in reply to the indignant maiden. With a tone of indifference she resumed her accusation of East Leighton extortion “It is too bad, Miss Forrester: my bill last week—without the house—was one pound, three and seven-pence.”

‘Impossible!’ cried Miss Chamberlayne: “what! without towels, table-cloths, sheets, and pillow-cases?—Impossible! My fortnight’s bill was eight and tenpence.”

Mrs. Dobson first looked up fixedly into the spinster’s face; and then with a visible shudder drew away her chair considerably further from the speaker; exclaiming as she did so, “Four and five pence a week, disgusting!”

The Welch blood rushed into Miss Chamberlayne’s face. She half rose from her chair,

and in a voice tremulous with passion exclaimed, "What's disgusting, Ma'am?—what's disgusting?"

"Why really, Ma'am," answered the widow coughing; "why really it is so completely an unheard of thing to me, a gentlewoman's washing bills of that two-penny half-penny amount that——"

"Disgusting, indeed!" repeated the spinster; "it is a good deal more disgusting, Ma'am, I conceive, for a female to have so singularly dreadful a habit as to require such an unbelievable extent of washing! disgusting? it is worse than disgusting; it's awful!" and she too shuddered strongly; and drew her chair back with a look compounded of hatred and pity.

"Extent of washing!" retorted the widow: "I believe, Ma'am, if you will ask any proper people, if you know any, that they will tell you that a woman whose washing bills are four and fivepence a week,"—and the widow elevated her nose towards the zenith as she specified the amount—"can not be a very agreeable person to have much to do with."

"Merciless powers!" exclaimed the spinster,

throwing herself back in her chair ; and the tears starting into her eyes : “ Merciless powers ! that I should live to have such words said to me. Oh ! ” she exclaimed, turning round quickly in her chair, and looking with an eye of fixed indignation at Mrs. Dobson ; “ oh you base woman !—you base woman !—how dare you contaminate the atmosphere with such an insinuation ? ”—She relapsed into affliction.—“ Oh that it should ever come to this—If, my darling Clara, if there is one thing I pride myself upon more than another it is the spotless purity of my skin ! This is indeed a blow ! ”

Mrs. Dobson, delighted at the extent of misery she had inflicted, imprudently laughed aloud. Miss Chamberlayne started from her seat.

“ You wretch ! ” she exclaimed, approaching the widow who shrunk back in her chair contemptuously ;—“ you wretch ! Yes ! I can account for your thoughts and your washing bills :—and to accuse me ! Oh ! you painted, unwholesome woman ! ”

The widow’s command of temper was but

‘ The torrent’s smoothness e’er it dash below.’

She started up from her seat ; and whilst

the paleness of extreme rage contrasted fearfully with the strong colouring of her cheeks, she fixed her two arms a-kimbo on her fat round sides, and gazed deliberately at her antagonist for some moments from head to foot, as if to select some particular spot on which to fix her invectives or her nails: and although Miss Chamberlayne returned the gaze with one of equal scrutiny and equal defiance, yet she trembled and turned pale.

There was a pause before Mrs. Dobson spoke: for she, like our maiden heroine, was not quick in arranging a retort, although rapid and powerful when she had once commenced. "Spotless purity of your skin!" thus she began, "spotless purity of your skin!—and spotless modesty of your *poetry*, I suppose!—making offers to men in verse—disgusting!—horrid!—running after them morning, noon and night. But Charles Hardinge—I beg your pardon, Ma'am—*your* Charles, *your* Charles Hardinge, does not care *that*," she snapped her fingers, "for all your rhymes, or your wrinkles either,—you impudent old wretch! and I'll tell you what, *Mrs.* Chamberlayne!—*Mrs.*

Chamberlayne ! I'll let you know, Ma'am, that if——”

Clara, who had made several unsuccessful attempts to allay the storm, now that the real subject of animosity had been introduced, became still more fearful of its consequences. She glided quietly out of the room, and sought Judge Hannah, her constant resource in all difficulties :—but e'er she could close the door, loud words of rancorous jealousy and fierce defiance reached her ear.

“Hannah, my dear Hannah,” cried Clara, trembling and laughing at the same time ; “for heaven's sake go into the parlour ! they will certainly murder each other.”

In a few rapid words, she explained the alarming position of affairs ; and ended by saying, “Be quick, be quick, Hannah, or poor dear Miss Chamberlayne will have both her eyes scratched out.”

The old housekeeper, who was comfortably reading in her little snugery, laid down her spectacles, and very deliberately closed her book. “Don't be in a hurry, Miss Clara,” said she, in a tone which implied that any

little personal chastisement the ladies might inflict upon each other, would not break her heart. "Don't put yourself out of the way, Ma'am : they won't do any mischief."

They approached the door : the loud quick shrill voices of both the ladies, both speaking without intermission, were distinctly heard. Hardinge's name was again and again repeated, mixed up with many of the most powerful expressions of mutual hatred and contempt, which our copious language affords : and now and then a stamping of the feet was heard, although deadened by the carpet on which the fair warriors stood.

"Go in, Hannah ; go in, for heaven's sake !"

"Stop a bit, child ! stop a bit. If I go in, I shall put an end to it all. They will stop the minute they see me. Listen, Ma'am. I'd give a golden guinea to see them at it." She looked down at the keyhole and shook her head. "My poor back !" she muttered with a groan ; and softly opened the door.

To Clara's great relief both the ladies were safe and uninjured ; not merely in person, but even in drapery. They were standing close to

each other ; and the energy of Mrs. Dobson's eloquence had driven the spinster very nearly into one corner of the room. Hannah's prediction was correct. Her appearance terminated the scene. Miss Chamberlayne darted out of her corner ; and entrenching herself behind the housekeeper's bulky person, exclaimed, " Oh my dear, dear, dear, good Mrs. Wheatley, save me from that ferocious little tiger ! · Oh ! I must faint ! I must ! "

Hannah, although with difficulty she could control her laughter, approached Mrs. Dobson, who had flung herself into a chair ; and said to her with a stern countenance, " Why, it is a matter of wonderment to me, Ma'am, that a real lady, like you, Mrs. Dobson, should misbehave yourself in this way. Suppose you had killed her ! Oh Ma'am ! you should never give way to passion ; and if anything dreadful had happened in this room, what would my master have said ? "

The widow panted to recover her breath : she put her disordered ringlets into shape, and strove hard to regain her self-possession ; but passion still mastered her. Springing up, and

bursting into a fury of tears, she brushed past the old woman, who with raised hands and eyes expressed the extremest degree of compassion and reproof, and rushed towards the door.

As she crossed the room, Miss Chamberlayne carefully shifted her position, so that the towering bulk of her protectress might be interposed between herself and the departing enemy, whose exit was not made in silence; but whose voice was so obscured by emotion, that 'conceited old idiot,' and 'insolent monster,' were the only intelligible words.

As soon as the cause of terror was fairly out of the house, Miss Chamberlayne gave positive intimation of an intention to faint; and open windows, fans, water, salts, and hartshorn, were resorted to in regular succession, and with the accustomed success. The spinster, still trembling with alarm and anger, dried her tears; and, although prompted thereto by Mrs. Hannah, evinced no inclination to go over the details of the late encounter. In a very few minutes she departed; but not until she had conjured Clara not to expose poor Mrs. Dob-

son by mentioning a single word to her uncle of what had taken place.

Before she passed through the Paddock gate, she looked carefully around to ascertain that her deadly adversary was not lying in ambush to spring upon her. Satisfied on this point, with a rapid step she proceeded to her Bower by a safe but circuitous path.

After her departure, Clara and the old housekeeper stood for some time looking at each other. Clara, freed from her alarm, was convulsed with laughter; and the tears ran down the old woman's cheeks, whilst her sharp black eyes twinkled with merriment.

At length the Judge suspending her mirth said, shaking her head gravely, "Miss Clara, did you look at that little woman's face as we came in? It was awful, Ma'am! Don't you think, if we could manage to let my poor master see that face for five minutes, it would soon put an end to the dinner parties and morning visits?"

"I do not know, Hannah; but I should think it must put an end to every thing but

horror and amazement. Poor dear Miss Chamberlayne! I never shall forget her look of pathetic grief when she flew to you for protection."

"Well, well!" said the Judge, shaking her head with still greater solemnity than before, "Leave me alone to manage, Ma'am, and we'll see the upshot of it all yet."

CHAPTER XII.

THE unfortunate misunderstanding, noticed in the preceding chapter, arose from the ardent wish of the two fair adversaries to obtain the first sight of their valued friend. But this advantage, for which they had risked friendship, features, drapery, everything that is most dear to woman, was gained without an effort by quiet, unpretending Jane Mackenzie.

It was late in the evening when Hardinge reached the Manor-house. He had much to relate to Clara and to the Judge; and many praises to bestow upon the latter, for her most important and well-timed advice. The next morning the subject was again resumed at the breakfast-table; and when at length it was concluded, he readily acquiesced in Clara's request that he would go to the Mackenzie's to

thank them for all their kind attentions to her during his absence.

Nothing is so invariable as the wish we all feel to bring our intimate companions to the same level of vice or virtue, wisdom or folly, as ourselves; and Clara Forrester, being most desperately in love, had laboured with great industry, although quietly and cautiously, to reduce her dear Jane to the same predicament as herself. She trembled for her uncle's danger in other quarters; and was convinced that he and Jane Mackenzie were suited to make each other happy. We are far from meaning to insinuate that the sensible quiet young Scotch woman had become another victim to the attractions of our veteran conqueror: but so far at least had Clara's well-intended efforts been successful, that on his entering the cottage she blushed deeply; and then, unluckily conscious that she did so, blushed still more deeply. Hardinge, as he noticed this, thought he had never seen Miss Mackenzie look so handsome. A face of intelligence, whose charm is in its expression, is never seen to greater advantage, than in the simple unadorned costume of the morning; and Jane

.

Mackenzie's countenance was one which bespoke no ordinary powers of mind.

Hardinge was too free from vanity to place her momentary confusion to the account of any interest he could have gained in her heart. He attributed it to its real cause, the machinations of his niece and her privy counsellor at the Manor-house; and he resolved to read them both a lecture on the subject.

He expressed warmly to the two ladies his gratitude for their kind attentions to his niece during his absence; and the old lady was full of her praises of Miss Forrester, and said 'that the lassie's kind heart had made her strive to regain her spirits for the sake of those who loved her; and that the good effects of the effort had now extended to herself.'

The events in London were fully discussed; and Hardinge was loud in his praises of Judge Hannah's sagacity, to which he said the discovery of the truth was entirely owing.

"In our wild country," said Jane Mackenzie, "one prediction so fortunately fulfilled would have established her reputation for second

sight : but mere experience and wisdom will have all the credit with you."

"And are there still," said Hardinge, "genuine believers in the second sight?"

"We Scots have, I believe," said Miss Mackenzie, "two separate kinds of belief, the sober, every-day, useful sort, for which you give us the epithet of 'canny;' and a wild imaginative belief which comes to us from old times, and which we cannot quite shake off."

"Those, Jane, who ought best to know," said the old lady gravely, "have believed in it : and I do not see what right we have to suppose ourselves wiser than our forefathers were. When I was a girl there were plenty of people who could speak to it of their own knowledge : but the new-world notions will bring us in time to believe nothing."

By degrees an animated discussion arose on the legends and poetry of Scotland : and Clara saw with delight, that, as her friend's reserve gave way before the energy of the argument, Hardinge was pleased and interested with the spirit and justness of her observations : and

when at length the visit terminated, Clara treasured up for Judge Hannah's especial comfort, her uncle's expression of surprise at its duration.

Hardinge was silent as they walked homewards. Miss Mackenzie's accession of colour still dwelt upon his mind. It annoyed him, because he perceived that Clara's well-meant but injudicious manœuvring would prevent his enjoying the society of her sensible and animated friend. He was therefore arranging the various divisions of the lecture which he intended to give her.

Their path lay by the cottage of the washerwoman, the investigation of whose bills had led to such fatal consequences ; and Clara, willing to break the silence by the communication of some important East Leighton news, said :—
“ Poor Sally Evans's children have had the measles ; but they are all recovered.”

“ Provoking !” said Hardinge, unconsciously adapting the reply to his own reflections. Clara looked up at her uncle, and smiled.—“ Yes, Clara, what did you say ?”

“ I only remarked, uncle,” said she, in her

demurest tone. "that all Mrs. Evans' eight children have had the measles, and have recovered: but I was not aware it was so provoking an occurrence."

"Oh, have they?" was the whole of his answer; and willing to get to other matters, he called to a little girl who, struggling under the weight of a large covered basket, had stopped at their approach, and was executing a succession of curtsies.—"What have you got in that heavy basket, my little woman?"

The child stood stock still: and opening her eyes and mouth to their full extent, the invariable mode adopted by young rustics to catch ideas, she at length answered, with a very low curtsy between each division of her speech,—
"Chickens, Ma'am, Sir,—and pigeons, Sir,—for Madam Dobson, Sir."

Clara laughed outright. "Ammunition for the campaign, my dearest uncle."

"Get away, you little brat," said Hardinge to the child, who still kept on curtseying and looking from one to the other in great amazement at the effects of her reply. "Clara," he said, with some attempt at sternness, "I must

take you to task ;—yes, and that absurd old abettor of your's too, if you renew again all the nonsense you pestered me with before I went to London. It is really extremely hard—absolute tyranny, that a man of my age cannot live quietly in his own house without being told that he is in love with every woman he happens to dine with, or speak to. It shall go hard,” he said, relaxing into his usual good-humoured tone, “ it shall go hard, but I will punish you both. That old woman's opinion of her own wisdom will now be intolerable.”

“ I am very, very sorry about the chickens, my dear uncle: but they came upon me so unexpectedly—upon both of us, did they not ?”

Hardinge resorted to a laugh, as the best escape from such difficulties: and although he met one or two other children with baskets, no more questions were asked.

But, alas! alas! before the glorious sun had twice sunk into the west, a liver-wing of the finest of the three chickens, which that unlucky basket contained, met its destined grave! In short—for why should we again go over the sad details—by degrees the dinners at Hill-side

Cottage became as frequent, and the morning visits as long as they had been before; and gloomy shakings of the head, and long and anxious discussions again commenced between the old housekeeper and Clara. The former still meditated some strong measure of prevention; but from day to day deferred it, as from day to day Clara still assured her that her hopes in Jane Mackenzie were unabated.

So trivial a circumstance as the mislaying of a glove brought things to a climax. A larger party than usual had been assembled at Hill-side Cottage; and in the bustle and hurry of their departure the fair widow mislaid her glove. In seeking for it her cheek accidentally touched our hero's, and accidentally continued to do so for some moments, as she whispered to him, "You dine here to-morrow, Hardinge, at six; but come at five.—I want to talk to you.—I want your advice and assistance."

Hardinge returned the pressure of the hand with which these injunctions were accompanied; and shortly afterwards took his leave. The old housekeeper, who always sat up for

him, and by whom every expression of his face was perfectly understood, marked an air of more than usual thoughtfulness, and his kind words of salutation were not uttered in his accustomed tone. She at once suspected the truth: and many hours of the night were employed in anxious consideration how best to avert the impending danger.

When the old woman entered Clara's room the next morning, she had on her most resolute and warlike look. The extent and grounds of her alarm were explained: and when Clara expressed a hope that she might be deceived, "No, Ma'am," she said, "I know every turn of my master's face. I can almost tell by his very walk if his mind is at ease. I'll bet my life, Miss Clara, that this very evening he'll make that little vixen an offer if I don't stop him. I never saw him look so serious before, but once; when he was going to defend a man who was tried for murder. If he once promises to marry her, Ma'am, he'll never draw back, if she was ten times more like the wicked One than she is. He wouldn't, though his heart was breaking."

“ Perhaps he has made her an offer already, Hannah.”

“ No, Ma’am, he hasn’t: there was too much doubtfulness about his face.”

“ At this moment,” said Clara, “ he likes Jane Mackenzie a thousand times best.”

“ *Likes!* what’s the use of that, Ma’am? what’s the use of liking? Ah! it has been a sad thing for us that she has been so shy. It does not signify talking, Miss Clara; when a man comes to my master’s age he must be made love to, more or less: he must be set a-going. However, it is too late for all that now. I must take the business into my own hands. I’ll go to her this very day, Miss Clara. I’ll tell her what she is: and I’ll work her up into such a passion that she shall show off her furies to my master; and that must cure him.”

“ My dear Hannah, she will kill you!”

“ She had better not try. I wish she would,” continued the old woman, her black eyes flashing with the same gladiatorial fire as when some fifty years before she had knocked done the injudicious Baronet; “ I wish she would. I would make short work with her then.”

“ You won’t succeed, Hannah.”

“ I shall, Miss Clara ; I should have liked better to have done it in a quiet way : and I have tried now and then, at odd times, to get my master to talk about her, that I might open his eyes : but it wouldn’t do, Ma’am ; he won’t bear it ; and I can’t bring myself to speak unbecoming my station to him, even to keep him out of mischief.”

Clara, who on various occasions had been witness to the Judge’s assumption of authority, and to her uncle’s submission, could not refrain from smiling. The old woman noticed this ; and colouring up, said with some asperity, “ Miss Clara, in all the nine-and-forty years I have served your uncle, not one undutiful word has ever passed my lips to him on serious matters. I scold my master, and put him to rights now and then in little things, that good servants understand best ;—how could I do my duty by him if I didn’t?—but I never said a word to him in all my life that I need be sorry for ; and I can’t bring myself to do it now.”

A few conciliatory words restored the old housekeeper to her equanimity : and at an

early hour, she set out on her perilous expedition. She found Mrs. Dobson alone, and in a state of 'measureless contentment.' The recovery of her glove, and its probable consequences, had occupied her sleeping and her waking thoughts; and she felt grateful to providence for the immense advantages which an *almost accidental* circumstance had procured her.

The Judge's ostensible business was charity, on which, as we have before stated, she was frequently employed by the widow, whose benevolent feelings had become very lively of late. She had commissioned Mrs. Wheatley to dispense her bounty to a sick widow, whose eldest son, her chief stay and support, had been killed by a fearful accident in the corn-field; and Hannah, who perfectly appreciated all the donor's motives, now came to report progress.

The plump little widow, in the midst of her smiles and welcomes, shuddered as she gazed at the old woman's tall, bulky, stooping figure, her large hands resting on her sides, and her eyes looking blacker and more keen than ever.

“Oh, Mrs. Wheatley, how do you do? I am very glad to see you. Come, sit down, sit down:”—the old woman declined the offer;—“your master says you have caught cold in your garden. Why don’t you take more care of yourself? Good people are scarce, you know.”

Hannah answered only with a curtsy, and one of her steadfast looks; but she chuckled internally, and whispered to herself, “Poor fat little body, it is a pity to vex her when she is so fond of one.”

“I was at widow Simpson’s yesterday, Ma’am; and I told her what you had given me for her for the winter; and she sends her humble duty, and a thousand thanks and blessings, poor soul.”

“Oh! Simpson,” said the widow, “her husband was killed, wasn’t he?”

“Her son, Ma’am.”

“Oh! yes, her son, poor woman. Ah! Mrs. Wheatley, I often think that we great people ought to do a vast deal more than some of us do. What happiness”—here she sighed—

“can be so great as doing good to our poor low-born neighbours? We are all the same flesh and blood, Mrs. Wheatley.”

“Yes, Ma’am, exactly,” said Hannah, somewhat drily.

“To be sure we are : and when I send ten, or twenty, or thirty shillings, or a couple of pounds, to make a poor family comfortable, don’t I spend my money to better purpose, than when I lay it out on my own back in laces and silks ?”

“Yes, Ma’am, much better indeed. My master has been to call upon Mrs. Simpson, Ma’am ; and he found Miss Chamberlayne there, reading the Bible to her, and crying like the rain.”

“What stuff!” exclaimed Mrs. Dobson, somewhat abruptly ; “what needs she meddle with the parson’s duty for ? He’s the proper person to read to sick people.”

“I don’t know, Ma’am ; but the poor old woman said it did her a deal of good ; and my master was quite delighted, and quoted poetry to Miss Chamberlayne ; and the good lady,

for she is a real good lady, was so pleased, and all in a twitteration with her Thomsons and Parnells, as she generally is, poor soul."

"Poor fool!" cried the widow, a little off her guard; "I wonder, Wheatley, how your master can have any patience with her nonsense."

"Well, Ma'am, I don't know;—I don't think she is overwise; but my master thinks her so handsome, and such a tall fine figure, and she's a real gentlewoman; and Miss Clara is so fond of her."

"Miss Clara! Lord bless me, Wheatley, the old fool will turn that girl's head. It is that makes her go moping about with that stupid Miss Mackenzie, and sighing after her lover. She has not shewn her face here once for a month past."

"I don't think that Miss Clara mopes about much, Ma'am; and if she is in love, she can't help it, poor child! And that, Ma'am, puts me in mind of what I came about, partly; but I hardly know if I ought to speak about it;—but perhaps you wont be offended."

There was something in the style of this

prelude which the widow did not relish. She threw herself back in the chair, knit her brows, and looked dignified.

Hannah now collected herself for the attack, with the deliberate caution of a skilful and experienced champion of the Spanish Bull Ring: who, whilst he keeps himself perfectly cool and collected, strives to excite, and madden into fury, the ferocious animal to which he is opposed. It pains us to compare a smart, well-dressed, plump, attractive, little English widow to so horrid a creature as a Spanish wild bull; but we have sought in vain for a better illustration; and after all, we offer this, more as a mental, than a personal resemblance.

“I ask your pardon, Ma’am, for what I am going to say; but indeed it is for your good as well as my master’s. You are thinking about marrying him, Ma’am; but it will be the worst day’s work you ever did. ’Tisn’t for me to abuse my master; but he is a proud man in his heart; and he never could live happy with a wife, who was not a real gentlewoman born; I ask your pardon for saying

so. If there is one thing he hates more than another, it is low notions: and then to live well with him, a woman should be as mild as a lamb, for he's hot-tempered himself: and oh, Ma'am! if he was to see you look, as I did when you drove that poor Miss Chamberlayne into fits, he and you would never have a comfortable hour afterwards. Don't think of him, Ma'am: you had better marry somebody of your own sort: and you can get plenty with your money; but you won't do for my master; you're not suitable; he'd be miserable with a vulgar wife, if she brought him tons of gold. And that's all I've got to say, Ma'am."

Hannah here concluded her oration. She might have continued it much longer; for the widow was struck speechless by the audacity of the attack. She gasped for breath. "You insolent old fool!" she exclaimed, when at length her power of utterance returned; "you insolent old fool! how dare you insult me in this way? I know who has set you up to it: but they shall smart for it, and you too.—Leave the house this instant, you old hag."

Hannah remained unmoved; and said in a

still milder accent than before :—" Don't put yourself into a passion, Ma'am ; and don't despise good advice because it comes from an old servant. It isn't your fault if you have been in trade ; and nobody blames you for it : but it is your fault if you try to marry a real gentleman ; and you'll be laughed at, Ma'am. Why, all the trades-people in the parish say you are no better than themselves ; and they talk about your paint, and rouge ; and say you cheat at cards, and that you like a drop too much, and about your over-eating yourself, and that your servants are afraid of their lives, and ——"

" It is a lie, you old wretch !" cried the excited widow, all control over herself lost in excess of passion ; " it is a lie, you old wretch ! I'll tell your master every word you've said, before I am an hour older !"

" Do, Ma'am, do. I never say anything behind my master's back that I wouldn't say before his face. I only care for what's best for him."

" It's false, you old hypocrite ! it's false : you only want to govern him and rob him."

Hannah had expected an attack of this sort, and bore it calmly. "I've not much to say for myself, Ma'am; but I'll do my best not to let my master make himself miserable for all the rest of his days: and he *shan't*, Ma'am, he *shan't*, if I can prevent it; and you may tell him that too."

"You are an artful old thief," cried the widow, starting from her chair, and stamping violently on the floor; "you are, and so are all belonging to you. Your nephew is a vagabond cut-throat, and a pickpocket, and will come to the gallows."

This attack was not expected, and Hannah's temper gave way. She trembled with rage, and her eyes flashed fire as she exclaimed:—"It's false, you little low-born vixen! it's false! Ned Wheatley,"—tears of anger came into her eyes as she named him,—"*Ned Wheatley's* a true-hearted English yeoman's son. If he has gone astray, he has a nobler soul than you, and all your grindstone-grinding smoky fathers and grandfathers put together, if you ever had any! But I ask your pardon, Ma'am," she said, calming herself by a strong effort, and

resolved not to injure the cause she had in hand; "I didn't come here to defend him, poor lad! nor myself either: I came to open your eyes to your real good. You must not think of my master, Ma'am; you are not fit for him, and he is not fit for you. He hates paint, and rouge, and passion, and gluttony, and hard drinking, and cheating, and vulgarity, and low ways, and shop-keeper's notions, and loud talking; and when he finds out that you are all this, he'll hate you and himself too, and you'll rue the day you ever saw him."

The widow rang the bell again and again, with unintermitting violence. "Kick that old devil out of the house, this instant," she exclaimed to the tall footman, who on the other side of the door had been a pleased auditor of the entire conference; "kick her out this instant, Sir!—I'll tell your master this, you old hag, before I'm an hour older; and he shall turn you into the street, or I'll know the reason why.—I will, if I die for it!"

"I dare you to do it, Ma'am,—I dare you to do it. I dare you to have me up before my

master, and speak the truth, face to face:—I dare you.”

Mrs. Dobson clenched her hands, and stamped so violently on the floor, that the fire-irons and chimney-ornaments rang again:—“Fellow! what do you stand there gaping for like a fool?—turn the old hag out this instant, or ——”

“Oh, I’ll go, Ma’am, I’ll go.—I don’t come here to make a rumpus. There’s no occasion for you to frighten this poor lad out of his seven senses.” She turned away; and approaching the footman, who in a state of extreme alarm at both the ladies, stood immovable at the door, his face as white as his well powdered head, gave him an encouraging nod: and then turning round, and standing quite still, she held up her admonitory finger, and repeated:—“I dare you, Ma’am, I dare you to face me and my master. Good morning, Ma’am;” she curtsied very low,—“good morning, Ma’am. I’m a better friend to you at this very moment than you think for, Ma’am; and that you’ll find out in the long run.”

A woman should always think for an hour

before she resolves to revenge an insult, be that insult what it may ;—be it even so extensive as to affect all her seven cardinal virtues, and her beauty into the bargain. Had Mrs. Dobson taken but one hour for consideration, she would never have laid her complaint before Hardinge. As it was, she flung on her shawl and bonnet; and rushed out at once, anxious to reach the Manor-house before her enemy,—anxious, in short, to have the first word. She soon overtook the infirm old woman, who was proceeding at a very leisurely pace. Although boiling with rage, the widow at first determined to avoid coming into contact with her by crossing over the way: but her spirit was too high; and she brushed quickly by her, muttering sundry words of censure, of which the most audible were—
'hideous old cripple.'

Hannah, who built her hopes of success much more on the widow's style of accusation than on her own defence, rejoiced at the fat little lady's rapidity of movement; and made no attempt to quicken her step. Nay, she purposely stopped; and had a long conference

with Sally Evans; who, the centre of a group consisting of two large baskets full of clothes, and two of her eight children, was then on her road to Hill-side Cottage.

“You have been sent for, Mrs. Wheatley,” said Hardinge’s servant-boy, “and you are to go in directly. Madam Dobson is flinging about like mad.”

The Judge did not hurry herself. She laid aside her cloak and bonnet; put her cap quite to rights; and then, muttering to herself—“Now, Hannah Wheatley, try if you can’t, for once in your life, bridle that tongue of yours;” entered the oak parlour. She gave one quick glance at the widow, to see that the furies, on which her hopes rested, had not subsided: and then turning towards her master, who was walking up and down the room, awaited his orders in her usual quiet and respectful manner.

Her calmness added new violence to the widow’s wrath. “Insolent old monster!” she exclaimed; and burst into a violent flood of tears, a luxury which ladies who assist their complexions should never indulge in: “Inso-

lent old monster !" and the voice, the look, the manner with which the words were uttered, put the old housekeeper at once at her ease.

" Mrs. Wheatley," said Hardinge in a grave and severe tone, " I am very sorry to find that you have forgotten the respect that you owe to this lady ; and that you have suffered your passion,—your zeal at least,—to get the better of your discretion."

" I asked the lady's pardon, Sir," said Hannah very mildly, " when I forgot myself about that poor lad, when she called him a vagabond, and a cut-throat, and a pick-pocket, and said that he'd come to the gallows. I asked her pardon for what I said about her grandfathers and the grindstones : but I defy the lady to say, if she will be so good as to speak the truth, that one other saucy word crossed my lips. Please, Ma'am, to tell my master what I did say ; every individual word, Ma'am : I won't deny a single word.'

Hardinge looked at Mrs. Dobson as if expecting a list of charges : but that lady, even in the very tempest of her rage, felt her dilemma ; and remained silent. He resumed

his chair; and seemed uncertain what to say or do next.

“Do, Ma’am, tell my master every thing I said!—Or shall I tell him, Ma’am; and will you stop me if I alter or leave out one individual word?—I said, Sir, that I thought you ought to have a wife who was a gentlewoman born, because you were so proud: and that you were so hot tempered, that a fury of a wife would never do for you. I told her what the tradespeople said of her, that she——”

“Hardinge,” cried the widow starting up; “will you let this insolent old wretch, this old hag, insult me before your face? If you have a grain of regard for me, I insist upon your turning her out of the house this instant!—Insolent old plotting thief!” she exclaimed, her face distorted with passion, her hands clenched, and her figure shaking with rage, “insolent old cripple! she leads you by the nose, and brags that she can do it! You would kick her out of doors if you had the spirit of a man!”

“Why now, Ma’am, I ask your pardon; but arn’t you this moment proving my very

words? — Dear me,” she continued, raising her hands, “it’s awful to look at!—I never said a word to the lady, Sir, that I hadn’t been told twenty times: it’s no stories of my making: it’s the talk of all the parish about her over-eating, and drinking, and cheating, and painting.”

“Wheatley,” said Hardinge, “I cannot allow ”

“*Allow?*” interrupted the widow; “*allow?* You allow the insolent old hag to rule you like a baby! That any thing in the shape of a man should be so cowed by such an old vixen!—Hardinge, turn the old liar out of the house this instant, or I’ll never speak to you again!”

She fell back exhausted into her chair; and tears of burning anger soon washed little channels for themselves through the rouge, and showed the natural substratum livid with rage.

Hardinge waved Hannah out of the room; leant back in his chair, crossed his knees, and judiciously determined to let events take their own course.

In a few minutes the widow's prudence returned to her : but it was too late. She looked at Hardinge, and the altered expression of his face confounded her. She looked in the glass, and the altered effect of her own confounded her still more. She hastily covered her disfigured visage with her handkerchief, and darted out of the room ; gave, as she passed, one glance of deadly ire at the door which separated her from the accursed housekeeper ; and reached Hill-side Cottage in such a state of ungovernable fury, that not only the tall footman, but every other servant in the house, even her own maid, the most courageous of the party, had fears for their personal safety.

Hardinge said not another word to Hannah on the subject. He kept his engagement and dined at Hill-side Cottage ; but it was not at five o'clock, nor until somewhat past six that he made his appearance in the widow's drawing-room. The ravages of the late tempest had all been repaired ; and the dinner proceeded in due course, as dinners always do, let what will occur. But the blow was struck, and the widow felt it was so. There was an altera-

tion in his tone and manner, which she could not mistake. That very evening, before she retired to rest, she spent nearly an hour in studying in the newspapers all the male arrivals at Bath, Cheltenham, and Tunbridge Wells ; and she deliberated upon the expediency of striking her tents, and carrying the war elsewhere.

Judge Hannah's face was radiant with glee when she entered her young mistress's room the next morning ; and the first words she uttered were, " You will never have Madam Dobson for an aunt, Miss Clara."

" How do you know, Hannah ?"

" How do I know, Ma'am ? I knew it before my master put his foot into the house. I heard him whistling as he came up the drive. He never whistles but when his heart's light. Lor, Ma'am ! when he used to come in from the courts, I knew how he'd got on as well as if I had been there. If he hummed a tune, and stood with his back to the grate, and his hands in his pockets, he'd beat them all ; but if he kept looking at the fire, and kicking the coals with his boots, he'd had the worst of it."—

Clara smiled.—“ Yes, Ma’am, I’m certain of it. Why, he came home last night as gay as a lark, called me a silly old Judge, and told me to go to bed and mind my own business. Would he talk in that way if he did not know he was safe from the little vixen ? If you had but seen how he looked the night before ! You thought me fool-hardy yesterday morning, Miss Clara ; but I never did so good a day’s work in all my life.”

“ But will he marry Jane Mackenzie, Hannah ?”

“ I’m no witch, Ma’am.”—Something like pride might have been detected in this denial of supernatural powers.—“ I can only guess what’s what as nearly as most people ; and I say, Miss Clara, that my master is cured of his love for that fat little shop-keeping vixen : but, my dear child, she must have been within an inch of hooking him.”

The old housekeeper did not overrate her victory. The veil, which love or something approaching to it had spread before Hardinge’s clear intellect, was raised for ever ; nor had all the widow’s indirect apologies for her warmth of

temper, all her looks of gentle upbraiding, all her audibly suppressed sighs been able to replace it. The magic influence of her dinner-table was at an end; and Hardinge again walked, and felt, and breathed a free man.

He almost shuddered, when he reflected how long he had stood on the brink of—what term may we use which shall not be offensive to the diviner sex?—on the brink, let us say, of a hazardous felicity. He felt that it was the greatest peril he had ever been exposed to. But although, like every body else, he was fond of relating the various dangers through which he had passed, it was rarely, very rarely indeed, that Mrs. Dobson's name ever escaped his lips in after years. Judge Hannah also was silent on the subject, and bore her triumph meekly.

On the morning which succeeded the dinner party, Hardinge received a note from Mrs. Dobson, which he answered, and instantly destroyed. His reply was in like manner destroyed by the widow. Their import, therefore, can only be collected from the fact, that immediately afterwards Mrs. Dobson sent Mr.

Irvine a written notice of her intention to give up Hill-side Cottage that day week.

The very same day, when Clara was preparing for her usual morning's visit to the Mackenzies, Hardinge volunteered to walk with her as far as their cottage. He did more than this ; he walked in, and stayed there all the morning. He wound silk ;—he read *Paradise Lost*, and there were few men in England who could read it as he did ; he proved by a demonstration, which would have done honour to a Senior Wrangler, that an engraved pattern, by which Jane Mackenzie was working, was incorrect in all its angles ; he drew one which was perfection ; read more Milton ; offered to wind more silk ; and, at length, to the mutual astonishment of Jane Mackenzie and himself, found it was past three o'clock ; and left the cottage convinced that the man who should be fortunate enough to gain her affections would be a very enviable person.

On this occasion, as on the former one, he was by no means talkative as they walked home to the Manor-house. Hannah met them at the door. She scanned both their faces with

her quick piercing eye ; and as they entered the hall, Clara's taper fingers clasped her large red hand, and told her as plainly as words could have done, that all would be as she wished. Hardinge detected the action : he stopped, turned round, and looked at them with some sharpness of expression : but gratitude to his deliverer, or prudence, or perhaps not knowing exactly what tone he could with safety assume, checked his eloquence, and he passed on to the oak parlour in dignified silence.

CHAPTER XIII.

At two o'clock on the second day after the mislaying of the glove, and within four and forty hours after the onslaught of the widow at the Manor-house, Miss Chamberlayne received information of the most authentic description that Mrs. Dobson had ordered post-horses to take her to Cheltenham at the end of the week ; and within three quarters of an hour afterwards the milkman brought the news that the board was up at Hill-side Cottage.—Great was her joy. “ Charles Hardinge,—yes, her Charles, should still be hers.” But, oh ! how short is human felicity !—how quick the change from happiness to woe ! At half-past four o'clock on the same day Phœbe learnt, and, if possible, from a still more unquestionable source of information, the butcher's wife,—and there was not a shop less given to false reports in the

whole parish,—that Mr. Hardinge and Miss Mackenzie were positively to be married in six weeks' time: and this report, which the politic old housekeeper had taken care should be speedily spread throughout the parish, was soon confirmed by Mrs. Wilkinson, and one or two other equally unquestionable authorities.

The revulsion of feeling, the transition from joy to anguish, was too much for the unhappy spinster. For a time it overthrew her reason. Never in any of her former amatory misfortunes had Mrs. Wilkinson seen anything like it; and Phoebe's tremblings, and despairings, and surmisings, and predictings, filled with horror, even the firm mind of Mr. Battersby himself.

“It's as certain as the sun's in Heaven,” said she, with tears in her eyes, “that the poor dear old soul will cut her throat, or poison herself and all of us. She could have stood up against Madam Dobson's having him ten times better. Why it was only two nights ago that she told me loads of things about Miss Mackenzie; that she was as good as married; that all her affections were under water with a dead lieutenant; and that respectable

Scotch people never fall in love more than once. Mr. Battersby, mark my words : she'll never get over it !”

Phœbe was wrong. The paroxysm of grief and distraction subsided by degrees.

‘ Hope springs eternal in the human breast ;’

and a new little crop of tender buds soon began to show themselves. She had during the first frenzy of her sorrow asserted very frequently that she should inevitably run mad. Now, that she had somewhat recovered her usual portion of reason, a natural train of thought led her to the conclusion that feigned madness might answer the purpose better.

“ The ineffably obdurate, the ungrateful monster,” she exclaimed, “ used to have a tender sympathetic bosom. The years that we have been — been — attached. Traitorous destroyer—it must melt him !—it must !—it shall ! Yes, and I needn’t expose my mental aberration to all mankind. A Scotch nobody !—twenty years too young for him—and she all her life dying with love for a dead sailor !—It is too bad ; it is disgusting ! I shall go mad, I know, I know I shall ; unless I personify distraction.

Oh ! that any one could tell me why I was born!—why, yes, why had I a heart framed expressly for its own destruction ?”

She rang the bell ; and Phœbe, who had prepared all her sympathies for another agonizing scene, was astonished at the change which had taken place in her mistress.

“ My good girl,” she said in a voice more plaintive and subdued than usual, but perfectly resigned, “ you must go to Farmer Whatdye-callum’s.”

“ Farmer who’s, Ma’am ?”

“ Robbins’s, child ;”—a deep sigh,—“ with my compliments, and ask him to give you a handful of his cleanest and longest straw. I should like it best if it has not been threshed out. I’ll pay him for it. And Phœbe,”—here her voice faltered, and she sighed for some time,—“ and Phœbe, ask him if he can let me have a nice fine lamb,—a female,—and what’s the price. Go, Phœbe, go !”

Mr. Battersby, who—as is usual with single ladies’ gardeners—passed rather more than half the day in the kitchen, listened with great attention to Phœbe’s narrative ; and shaking

his head with much gravity, said : —“ Mrs. Phœbe, I’ll tell you what ; I’d bet a gallon she’s going to have a bit of fun, and sham crazy.”

“ It’s real,” said Phœbe, shuddering ; “ it’s real ; and you ought to be ashamed of yourself, Mr. Battersby, for talking like that. When she’s shamming, she’s always in her tantrums with her poetry and stuff. I know all her ways. It would have melted a flint to have looked at her, poor dear old soul, when she talked about the lamb.”

“ Well, go along, lass ; and I say,” added he, with a knowing wink, “ mum’s the word. It will all be known soon enough, without our telling it.”

During Phœbe’s absence, various trains of thought occupied the fair spinster’s mind. “ Is not,” she mentally exclaimed, “ is not this personification of assumed insanity a sort of flying in the face of Providence ? Yes, it was all very well for the old Greeks and Romans, when they were saving their country, or going to kill their children ; but it’s a different thing in a Christian country. What will Mr. and Mrs.

Middleton say ?” Another fearful thought arose. “ Suppose,—oh ! suppose the disease should really be brought on by my fond delusion ! Oh ! if my mental throne is once cast down, how is it ever to be put to rights again at my time of life ? Never mind ! I’ll do it. At all events, it will be sure to break his heart, and I shall have that comfort at least. Oh, Charles ! Charles Hardinge ! and is it come to this ?”

By degrees more pleasing thoughts arose : not that her hopes of ultimate success increased ; but there was something so out of the common, so romantic, so poetical, in the enterprise.

“ Yes, I will carve his false frail name on trees ! Yes, I will lead about my gentle lamb ! What a picture ! A Scotch woman too ! Could any created being have believed it possible ?”

Pensively resting with her arm upon the table, she framed to herself a blended creation hovering somewhere between Ophelia and Sterne’s Maria, but with the inestimable advantage, peculiar to herself, of poetic power. The outline of her plan, for the details would

require her deliberate study, was to fabricate a wreath of straw, to be worn under a large bonnet, so as only to be visible at pleasure, and a scarf of the same material, tied with light blue ribbon, to be also shrouded under a large silk cloak, except when brought to bear against her perfidious Charles.

She was aroused from her meditations by the entrance of Phœbe sideways through the door, with her apron full of long straw.

“Master Robbins sends his duty, Ma’am ; and you are quite welcome to the straw ; he can’t think of charging for it ; and he says the she-lambs ain’t the best ; and will you want all the four quarters at once ?”

Our suffering heroine looked up into the girl’s face ; but the meaning of Farmer Robbins’s question was evidently lost upon her, so greatly was she affected by the first sight of her future drapery. She heaved a deep sigh—
“Take it up stairs, child, and put it in the top long drawer. What did he say about the lamb ?”

Phœbe again repeated the farmer’s message ; with the addition that he supposed it would be

somewhere about seven-pence a pound, and they should be sure to kill to-morrow."

"Stupid, unfeeling monster!" cried Miss Chamberlayne, "Take it all up-stairs to my room."

Ere long the bell was rung.

"Phœbe!"

"Yes, Ma'am."

"Phœbe, desire Mr. Battersby to sharpen my best pruning-knife—the point."

Phœbe flung down the napkin she had in her hand; "No, Ma'am, I won't—I won't! you are going to do yourself a mischief! Oh dear! oh dear!" and several tears made their appearance.

"Silly child!" cried Miss Chamberlayne greatly moved. "Ah! yes!—But my faithful Phœbe, I only want it for botanical purposes. I do indeed. Go and obey your mistress, my poor child! Yes I will carve his frail fond name on trees," she added when the door was closed, "yes I will lead about my pensive lamb!—The stupid monster of a farmer. Oh Charles! Charles Hardinge! oh heaven forgive you for this perfidious blow!"

In a few minutes she ascended to her bed-chamber; and commenced her operations. The straw was sadly stiff and hurt her fingers but,

‘The labour we delight in, physics pain;’

and at the end of two hours something not unlike a wreath was produced, and a vegetable scarf, which with its bows of pensive blue looked, she thought, graceful and interesting.

She put on the scarf, and as she did so was startled by an unusual noise: she paused to listen; every thing was still, and she conceived it must be the ends of the straw grating against her gown. She took off her cap; and with great care securing her auburn ringlets from injury, put on the wreath. It was a painful and difficult operation; and again and again the harsh fabric required to be altered.

“Heavenly powers!” she exclaimed; “I never, never, shall make it sit. Oh the monster, to make me do all this!”

She heard the same noise again, but not so loud as before: it was certainly the straw, or perhaps her own excited imagination.

“It is becoming,” she said, “indubitably

becoming. Oh, if I could but rush out upon him from Sally Evans's cottage !—I could tell the poor woman it was a mystic rite." She placed herself in various attitudes before the glass. "My lamb, and my willow wand, yes, yes,—it *shall* melt his flinty, his irrevocable heart. I wonder how it looks behind."

The spinster had no cheval-glass, no second mirror to assist her; and in her struggles to obtain a complete view of her back-front, she adopted one or two very peculiar attitudes. The noise was renewed, but louder than before. She rushed to the door; and to her unspeakable indignation, found Mr. Battersby and Phœbe both on their knees, powerless from excess of laughter. She tore off her wreath, and with such careless haste, that a very considerable portion of her ringlets took their departure with it, to the other end of the room.

"Monsters!—insolent monsters! Get out of my house this instant, Sir;—you shall never do another day's work for me, if you were to live ten thousand years. I shall tell Mrs. Battersby of this."

The detected horticulturist glided silently down stairs ; and as he resumed his shoes in the kitchen, pondered, somewhat gravely, on the uncertain revenue of all jobbing gardeners.

Meanwhile, Miss Chamberlayne throwing her wreath and scarf into a closet, and resuming her cap, confronted her faithless domestic with a sterner look, than her kind features had ever worn before. Phœbe awaited her doom in silence, determined to reserve all her tears and eloquence for one grand burst.

“ Phœbe.”

“ Yes Ma’am ;” a low curtsy.

“ Phœbe, I shall not treat you as most ladies would. You will get yourself a place this day month.—Yes, you ungrateful monster ! I ought to turn you out of doors this instant. Oh you paragon of ingratitude ! you might have had some glimmerings of compassion for one of your own sex, if I had been your fellow servant even. I have been a kind mistress to you, you ungrateful girl.”

This was the proper time : the pent-up tears started out in one sudden flood ; “ I’m ready

to go, Ma'am, this very night, if you think you can better yourself: but I can't bear to be cried down in that way; I can't bear it,"—another flood of tears,—“I did it all for your good, Ma'am.”

“*My* good, you wretch! and pray, was that great male monster peeping through the key-hole of my door, of my *bed-room* door, for my good?”

“Yes, Ma'am, to be sure he was. I made certain sure you were going to do yourself a mischief, and I was afeared to come up by myself. But it is always the way”—more tears—“the most affectionatest people are always the most put upon.”

“You insolent creature!” cried Miss Chamberlayne, with renewed indignation; “what? was it for my good that you were both laughing in that inhuman way?”

“Lord bless you, Ma'am, we weren't a-laughing at *you*; but the straws did look so unaccountable comical as you were twisting about. But it's no matter. I've done my duty by you, Ma'am, morning, noon, and night; and I'll say so to my dying day: and it's a great comfort

to me to be certain that there's nothing particular the matter with you, Ma'am."—more tears.—“ Am I to go home to my poor mother to-night, Ma'am ?”

“ Hold your tongue, you provoking creature ! and go down stairs this instant, and let me have my tea.”

She shut herself up in her room ; collected all the straw, scarf, wreath, fragments, and all, into one bundle : and put it out of sight behind the chimney-board ; muttering to herself about a dozen separate and distinct reasons why sensible people, particularly single women, ought to wish to die with the least possible delay. She then descended to her parlour in a state of tolerable composure ; and after a few admonitory words rescinded the warning, as she had often done before, by a peace-offering ;—a shilling was the usual sum, but it was now half-a-crown. With some hesitation, and a few blushes, she hinted to her demure and penitent handmaiden her wish, that what had taken place about the straw should not be mentioned ;—she would explain to her what it all meant another time : —and that she might as well make Mr. Bat-

tersby give his solemn promise not to talk about it to a living soul ; particularly not to Mrs. Wilkinson ;—not to any one, not even to his wife ; and she wished he would take home the cold shoulder of mutton with him, it was fatter than she liked.

Let not our ten thousand fair and gentle readers, whose bright eyes as they glance over these pages secure to them immortality—the enviable, the proud, the three months' immortality of a favourably received novel—let them not view with scorn the scene which has been laid before them. If the sensitive temperament of our maiden heroine be considered, the state of excitement in which her mind had been long suspended, the sudden transition from new and buoyant hope to the depths of certain misery, they will pity rather than blame her.

It was the crisis of her mind's disease ; and, as in the case of other acute maladies which take a favourable turn, she slept profoundly during the whole of the night, and until a very late hour the next day ; and then got up much refreshed, and with scarcely any fever remaining.

There was one member of Miss Chamberlayne's establishment who has not yet been introduced to our reader's notice : and he it was who announced his fair mistress' recovery to her anxious friends. It was her dog, a large, very old, and very fat spaniel. His proper appellation was Ganymede : but in his earliest infancy Miss Chamberlayne had given him the endearing name of Popsy Wopsy ; and with the disregard which she sometimes evinced for the precise correctness of her terms, she still, although he had now reached a good old age, sometimes indulged in the fond name : the population of East Leighton never used any other.

This venerable quadruped was a sort of amatory weather-gage, which, to the Doctor and his wife, and various other persons, had for many years indicated the exact state of his mistress' affections. When no tender attachment was in progress, Popsy Wopsy always walked out with the spinster. When love was in the ascendant, he was never seen ; for she conceived that there was something old-maidish-looking, something anti-nuptial in the accom-

paniment of a lap-dog; and the poor animal had never once been seen by her side since Mr. Hardinge's arrival at the Manor-house. Now he made his appearance: and this last attachment had been so unusually long, that the poor creature had become dreadfully inactive, fat, and bilious. There was one novel circumstance attending his present appearance; he was attached to his fair owner's wrist by a long broad light-blue ribbon—for what purpose except to drag the feeble creature forward no human being could imagine. But there was something soothing to Miss Chamberlayne's feelings in this slight approach to the lamb-system; and light blue was dear to her heart—it was a pensive colour.

The sudden apparition of Popsy Wopsy established beyond a doubt the fact of Miss Mackenzie's conquest: and except as to the trimmings of the wedding gown, the names of the bride's-maids, and a few other points of minor importance, not a particle of uncertainty remained.

The very essence of Miss Chamberlayne's nature was kindness of feeling; her heart

was a perfect well-spring of affection always ready to overflow. Her dream of love was at an end: with it ended also all feelings of animosity against Mrs. Dobson. She could not bear to think that her oldest friend—her schoolfellow—should depart from her in hostility, in *useless* hostility.

Her first walk with Popsy Wupsy after her recovery was to a point, whence she could command a view of Hill-side Cottage; partly from old friendship, and partly to see whether the board was really up. There it stood exactly in the place it had occupied six months before.—Heavenly powers, what a six months that had been! Alas, how many bitter thoughts did that one square bit of wood give rise to!

“Oh,” she exclaimed; “oh, had it never been removed—removed by my own self-slaughtering agency—oh! how immense, how ineffably immense might the catastrophe have been!—Yes, if it had not been for those infatuating dinners, I should have enslaved my—my—But who can stem the torrent of an overwhelming Providence?”

She dared not dwell upon the subject, but wended onwards with her Popsy, who kept so close to his mistress, that the pale blue ribbon dragged upon the ground. After looking in at one or two cottages, and pleasing their inmates and soothing her own feelings by a little chit chat, she bent her steps homewards, calling on her road at Farmer Robbins's, and thanking Mrs. Robbins for the straw, and with great earnestness asking her if she did not think it was the best thing for stuffing a footstool.

Immediately on re-entering her Bower, she sat down to address her departing friend. We give the entire series of epistles ; and the dates will show that they formed no exception to the usual rapidity of female correspondence.

“ Miss Chamberlayne's feelings oppose insurmountable obstacles to the departure of Mrs. Dobson, without the meed of a benignant tear, without an ardent solicitude for her future, her ulterior prospects. Miss Chamberlayne's heart, redolent of early youth, prompts her to say farewell.

“ Eglangtine Bower, Thursday, One o'Clock.”

“ Hill-side Cottage, Two o’Clock.

“ MADAM,

“ I have no wish to leave this detestable place with any ill-blood towards you. I am sorry for your disappointment, and I wish you health and happiness for the remainder of your days.

“ Your humble servant,

“ ANN DOBSON.”

“ Miss Chamberlayne cannot disguise from Mrs. Dobson any more than from her own interior feelings, the heartfelt satisfaction which distends her bosom at the termination of a coldness which is preternatural to her constitution. Miss C. begs to respond to Mrs. D.’s kind expression of regret, and to assure her that she equally regrets Mrs. D.’s disappointment, and wishes her health and happiness for the remnant of her days. Miss C. fondly hopes that a personal interview may, before Mrs. D.’s departure, dispel the clouds of interrupted friendship.

“ Eglantine Bower, half-past Two.”

“ Thursday, Three o’Clock.

“ DEAR MADAM,

“ I shall certainly P. P. C. you before I leave

this hole. My servant will leave a brace of partridges with this note, and my best wishes.

“ Your’s faithfully,

“ A. D.”

“ Eglantine Bower, half-past Three.

“ MY DEAR FRIEND,

“ A thousand thanks for your beautiful birds. I accept them as the doves of peace. I shall do myself the pleasure of looking in this evening before tea.

“ Affectionately your’s,

“ ISABELLA.

“ P.S.—Mutual forgiveness is the choicest gift of heaven.”

“ Thursday, half-past Four.

“ DEAR ISABELLA,

“ Dine with me to-day at six. I will tell you my plans. I shall be quite alone ; so don’t fuss yourself about your smart things.

“ In haste, your’s affectionately,

“ A. D.”

“ The Bower, Five o’Clock.

“ DEAREST ANNA,

“ I shall be most happy, most unequivocally happy, to join your social but solitary board.

“ Yes, my dearest friend, you appreciate my heart’s respondent chords. Yes, we will again renew, ah! never to be dissolved, the early, the enduring ties of juvenile affection. I will not detain your domestic by more fully developing my undiminished feelings.

“ Till six, adieu—adieu !

“ Unalterably your’s,

“ ISABELLA.”

The result of this renewed friendship was exactly what might have been expected. When on the next morning but one, Mrs. Dobson’s glittering equipage, with its four horses, and the postillions in their best silk jackets, dashed off through the village, Miss Chamberlayne was snugly seated in one of its luxurious corners. As they passed the Manor-house, both the ladies looked the other way ; the skin of Mrs. Dobson’s under lip was in some danger ; and Miss Chamberlayne shed a silent tear, and half-breathed one parting sigh : but both the ladies rallied before they reached Mrs. Mackenzie’s cottage ; and although they still continued silent, a look was interchanged between them, which expressed as fully as

words could have done the feelings of scorn, contempt, and disgust, which the mere outside of the house occasioned them.

The baffled widow, as the carriage stopped at the turnpike gate, muttered an inaudible, but firm vow, that she would never set her foot in the detestable parish again. Poor lady! she had indeed cause for bitter grief, when she reflected how completely her six best months had been thrown away. Her six *best* months: for with commercial accuracy she knew, that every hour, as it glided by, took somewhat from the marketable value of the commodity which she wanted to dispose of. And yet, although correct in her theory on this point, she never could persuade herself to bring it into practice. She always outstood her market: and hence it was that Mrs. Dobson remained Mrs. Dobson to the very last.

Through a long series of years she continued one unintermitting struggle to get rid of the name: but, in spite of the many charms which surrounded her, she was unsuccessful. She was always striving to drive too hard a bar-

gain ; always requiring more youth and beauty in her husband than could be obtained for her money. Thus she unwisely laboured to gain the affections of young clergymen, handsome captains, and junior barristers, during all the years that she might have had a chance of success with East India colonels, King's counsel, and plump rectors : and these in their turn were pursued, when declining age and diminished beauty should have taught her to fish exclusively for admirals, deans and chapters, full generals, and judges.

She finished her career—as we have already said—Mrs. Dobson : and it was the opinion of nearly all the medical men who attended her, that if she could have resisted the fascinations of made dishes and champagne, and stuck to East India madeira and her school favourites, the legs of mutton, her life might have been prolonged for many years.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE days of Philip Tarleton were drawing to their close. We have no intention to occupy our pages with the details of an Old Bailey prosecution for forgery thirty years ago. The same scenes have been acted, and the same revolting tale has been told a thousand times ; and a thousand times has human life been sacrificed to the impolitic severity of the laws.

In the present instance the evidence was too strong, too direct to be shaken. An attempt was indeed made to disprove the statement of the frame maker ; but it was utterly abortive. A defence was then set up, that the will had been ante-dated at the express direction of Sir Edward Forrester ; and some good point-blank swearing was brought forward to support this ; it was all overthrown by the registry of the clerk's burial. One or two attempts

to establish flaws were equally unsuccessful, being foiled by the legal talent with which the prosecution was conducted.

Throughout the trial Sparkes showed himself fearless, acute, and perfectly hardened to all sense of shame or danger. His eye ranged boldly round the galleries of the court; and he greeted with a complacent smile more than one fair object of his vows. The contrast was striking between this degraded villain and the man who stood in equal peril by his side. Calm and collected, although depressed and pale as death, his handsome person and gentlemanly bearing, and the accordance of his manner with the fearful situation in which he was placed, obtained for him the sympathy of the spectators. Not for a moment did his composure or his self-possession desert him: not even when the awful sentence of death was pronounced, when Sparkes's bold look fell, and a thrill of horror ran through the crowd, not even then did Tarleton's nerves give way; nor did one look, or word, or movement divulge the pang that was then rending his heart.

After, as during the trial, the conduct of the unhappy men was as dissimilar as possible. Sparkes had not passed out of the court before he began to boast loudly of his determination to live gaily to the very last; abused with coarse oaths the judge, the jury, and the laws; rallied his companion with vulgar levity for looking so cursed serious at a shilling's worth of hemp; and declared that for his part he'd soon manage to settle accounts with the other world. By this display of forced courage, he gained from the kindred souls around him, turnkeys, and fellow prisoners, and fellow villains whose course of crime was not yet run out, the worthy praise of being "a real prime chap, and one who would die game as a man should."

During the days of preparation which were allowed them—for a mitigation of punishment at that period was never even thought of—little intercourse took place between the condemned men; and when they did meet, it was always at the request of Sparkes. Their interviews, for the most part, ended in dispute and recrimination; the attorney striving by fami-

liarity of manner to annoy his proud accomplice ; and Tarleton still preserving the same haughty tone of superiority, which more than anything else galled his low associate. But on the morning previous to that on which they were to suffer, they met at Tarleton's desire.

Philip Tarleton feared death as little as it was possible for man to do. The prospect of another world had no terrors for him. Totally without religion, beyond some vague admission that there might be a God, but not a God of mercy or of vengeance, he sneered at the Christian's creed as a remnant of the antiquated superstition of an ignorant and credulous age. With him there was no hereafter ; or if there were, it was one of which he knew nothing, over which he had no control ; and which therefore it was beneath the dignity of a philosophic mind to fear. Yet even he, despite the cold philosophy on which he prided himself, had his causes of alarm and terror. He disregarded, he sneered at death ; but the morbid refinement of his nature could not endure the ignominious approach to it. He could better dare to face his God, than to endure the gaze

and the shoutings of a vulgar gaping crowd ; and this at the very time when he knew that he did not value at one nutshell the good opinion of all those who composed it. This weakness, this morbid delicacy of feeling in strong and powerful minds is hard to be accounted for, but of frequent occurrence : and long before his trial the idea of self-destruction had become familiar to him.

Whilst his fate was doubtful, whilst the uncertainty of the law still afforded a ground of hope, his mind had some object on which to dwell, and which lessened, although it could not dispel, the gnawing remembrance of his treachery towards Sir Edward Forrester. But when the judgment of the court had sealed his fate, the upbraidings of his conscience returned with double violence upon him. The image of his murdered friend—for he knew, although his hand had not given the blow, that he *was* his murderer—haunted him unceasingly, was present to him awake or asleep ; and he looked forward with anxious impatience to the hour in which he might be freed from this unendurable misery. Yet with that strange tenacity of

life, which has influence even upon those who most wish for death, Tarleton delayed his purpose from day to day. Lingerings hopes of pardon or of escape still clung to him, although he knew how vain they were : and this man, resolute and courageous as was his nature, postponed to the last day of his allotted term that act which he looked forward to as the safe end of all his misery, the safe, unsuffering, and eternal sleep of death.

In the dissolute society in which all the years of Tarleton's manhood had been passed, his acquaintance was numerous ; but there was scarcely one man whom he could call his friend. Many circumstances conspired to this. His powers of conversation, his gentlemanly and fascinating manners led them to seek his society ; but they feared rather than loved him. He on his part felt his own superiority, and strove little to disguise that he did so : he had been satisfied with the deference they showed him ; and if he could rule them by his mental superiority he cared little for the love or friendship of men whom he despised. He had been among the set rather than of it.

Two or three of those with whom he had been most intimate visited him in prison ; but more to gratify their curiosity than from any feelings of regard. In vain had he endeavoured to move these young men to lend their assistance to a plan which he had devised for the escape of himself and his companion : nor did their energy extend so far as to incur the less serious risk of giving him the means of self-destruction, earnestly as he pressed them to do even this.

But there was one heart strongly and fondly attached to him ; and it was that of the being whom, above all others, he had ill-used and neglected. Emma Woodford, through all the years of cold neglect which she had endured, amidst all the feelings of jealousy and rage which the unprincipled conduct of her seducer had inflicted upon her, never, even whilst her mind had brooded over schemes of vengeance, had ceased to regard him with deep and all-enduring love.

To her only could he now look for aid : but more than one reason led him to fear that she would oppose his intention. He knew that the

religious bigotry which had grown upon her would render her adverse to his design; and he feared that her woman's heart would revolt at the idea of being the immediate agent in the destruction of the man she loved. Both these feelings were indeed strong in Emma Woodford's breast: but stronger than every thing else was the devoted, the submissive love which she still felt towards him.

Although the task almost rent her heart she performed it: and placed the instrument of death in the hands of the man to save whose life she would willingly have sacrificed her own. It was a small steel probe, less than four inches in length, flattened at one end and gradually tapering to a point of extreme fineness. It was immediately after Tarleton had received this that he sought an interview with his accomplice.

Sparkes entered the cell with a bold step and swaggering air: he purposely clanked his fetters loudly to show how totally he disregarded the awful situation in which he stood. The gaoler withdrew: and the two condemned men were left alone.

“ Well, Phil Tarleton, here I am ; what good can I do you ? ”

“ Mr. Sparkes,” said Tarleton in his usual haughty tone ; “ this will in all probability be the last time that we shall be permitted uninterruptedly to converse together.”

“ No it won’t, my dear fellow : we may chat together to-morrow till eight o’clock to our heart’s content.”

He looked at Tarleton to see the effect of this needless reference to the morrow. It produced none : and Tarleton, without noticing it, said : “ I have laboured hard but unavailingly during the last three days to devise a plan and obtain the means of escape ; — no, Sir, not for myself alone ; — for both of us ; but the heartless unmanly and unfeeling persons to whom I have applied, although the danger would be only to their purse, have refused me their aid. I have sought this interview that I might tell you this ; — that you might know, that although there has been little intercourse between us, and I may have offended you by keeping myself apart, as thinking our ideas and habits were little suited to each other, yet that as regards your

safety I have laboured for it as earnestly as for my own."

"Upon my soul, my dear fellow, I am immeasurably obliged to you; but I should perhaps be more sensible of the obligation if you had had any chance of success, which I presume you never had; but I must take the will for the deed. Eh?"

"There is another subject," said Tarleton, "on which I wish to speak to you."—He paused for a moment.—"Will you, Sir, before I mention it, promise me as a man of —, will you promise me that it shall not pass your lips—that you will not divulge it?"

Sparkes looked at him keenly. "Promise? Yes, to be sure I will. Honour among thieves. Upon my soul, you have a devilish low opinion of me, Tarleton; but never mind. I'll swear by god or devil—or whatever else you have taken a fancy for, to supply their places—that I won't peach; no, not if it's half a dozen murders. You managed that coxcomb's death?—that Forrester's? An even bet that's what bothers you. I always thought as much." The expression of Tarleton's face convinced him

that he had guessed aright. "Well," he continued, "devilish little would that have bothered *me*, if I had got his money. Come, talk away."

"You wrong me, Sir. Sir Edward Forrester's blood is not upon my hands."

"Not upon your conscience either? Well, never mind; I'm mute attention."

"I have tried," said Tarleton, "to obtain the means of our escape. I have failed. That being so, I have laboured, and with success, to procure the means of outwitting these accursed laws, the means of dying undisturbed by a shouting crowd, calmly and undisgraced—dying by our own hands, as men of courage should die. In a few hours our lives must be yielded up amidst a gaping yelling mob. We have been little suited to each other; nor has friendship formed any part of the bond of union between us; but I will not, in this last day of my life, act a mean or ungenerous part towards any one whose fate is implicated with my own. You shall not have to say that I have tricked you out of my companionship in mis-

fortune; that I left you to endure, alone, the scene which I felt unable or unwilling to meet."

"Well, that's fair and handsome; but how will you do the trick? Some cursed painful job or other, which a man would be a fool to meddle with. What are your means?"

"I have," said Tarleton; but he checked himself. "The means are certain; nor will our sufferings be greater than what we must otherwise endure; probably not so great. I need not now explain to you what they are. Accept my offer or reject it. I have acted openly and fairly by you. If you accept it, we can obtain permission to meet again this evening, and in a few minutes it can be done."

A smile of malignant joy passed over the attorney's face. "Well, Phil Tarleton,—but you don't like that free and easy style—well, Mr. Tarleton, you are a fine fellow, and I owe you many thanks for this and various other favours; and, by the bye, for being here, among the rest. I shall be devilish sorry to lose your support and philosophical sublimity to-morrow morning. But no; I've sworn it, and I'll keep to it. I'll live gay and happy to

the very last, and I'll die as a man should die, snapping my fingers at the whole set of them, from the brute of a Home Secretary at Whitehall, to the old hag who sweeps out the court. Will I cut my throat to-night? No! and throw away the guineas I have laid out to bribe the half-pardoned felons they make keepers of, to let me have a jolly night of it? No, Master Phil, I know better. Take my word for it, there shall be some thousands who will go to bed without any fear about their dreams at eight o'clock to-morrow, who won't enjoy their supper as I'll enjoy mine. Yes, and it shall go devilish hard, but I'll make old Cotton drink my health and best affections in a bumper of claret."

"Well, Sir, I have no wish to urge you in this matter. I have your solemn promise of secrecy?"

"Still as the grave, my dear fellow—still as the grave."

They parted; and the moment the door of Tarleton's cell was closed, Sparkes, his face flushed with malignant pleasure, turned to one of the two men who accompanied him.

“Go,” he said, “as quick as lightning, my fine fellow, and tell the Governor that I must speak to him this instant, on a matter of life and death. Yes, *Mister* Philip Tarleton, I will be too many guns for you at last, my proud imperious gentleman; and harkye, old cock, when you see my friend again, tell him you come with *Mister* Sparkes’s profound respects to Phil Tarleton. Mind the very words.”

Within ten minutes two of the under-gaolers entered the cell; and Tarleton was not left in suspense for a moment as to the malignant treachery of his accomplice. The men immediately commenced a minute search of his dress, and of every part of the dungeon; but they failed to discover the instrument of death. With a caution, at which he now rejoiced, he had secreted it beneath the straw seat of the chair on which he sat; and although that chair as well as every thing else in the apartment had been carefully examined, it escaped detection. His blood boiled with indignation at the perjured falsehood of his associate; but he shook off the feeling, determined that nothing

should disturb the calmness with which he had prepared himself for death.

The book over which he had spent the day was Cicero's 'Tusculan Questions.' There was no affectation in the selection. It had been one of the favourite volumes of his earlier days, and its sublime but vague and delusive reasoning accorded well with the tone of his mind. Never had he perused it with more delight than he now did ; never had he more keenly relished its perfection of style and language.

For the last time he was visited by the Clergyman of the prison, whose office, though it be sneered at and made the theme of ridicule, is one of the most arduous that man can undertake. There was a gentlemanly elevation of manner and courtesy of expression in Tarleton's steady refusal of the proffered aid. Deliberately, but without a single sarcastic or offensive word, he declared, in still more decided terms than he had used at their former interviews, that his religious opinions were fixed and unchangeable, the result of mature reflection ; that any attempt to disturb them

would be fruitless and ill-judged—and whilst he thanked him courteously for his good intentions, intreated that the few hours which remained to him might not be disturbed. It was with a bitter pang that the Ordinary withdrew from the cell ; and his heart bled that so noble, so elevated a mind should be thus doomed to ruin.

There was one other painful interview which Tarleton had to go through—It was with Emma Woodford and his child. The vehement grief of the poor boy was a strange contrast to the perfect calmness of his mother. Her heart appeared deadened and turned to stone. Not even at the moment of their parting when Tarleton said, “ Emma Woodford, you forgive me ? ” did a tear rise to her eye ; nor did her voice tremble as she answered ; “ I do, Philip Tarleton, as freely as I hope to be forgiven : and oh, may the God whom you disdain and outrage, forgive you too ! ”

It was not until the unfortunate woman knelt in the solitude of her chamber before the image of her Redeemer, that the anguish which opprest her broke forth in a paroxysm

of grief so violent, so continued, as to threaten her existence.

The hours wore on. The two men who had been stationed in the cell throughout the day were relieved at night by two of their companions. These, as their predecessors had done, proffered the solace of their conversation and gaol-like sympathy to their charge, and like them were repelled. It was his wish, he told them, to be left undisturbed to his own reflections.

“Well, Master, all’s one to us: read away, if it will do you more good than a little chat—I should think not: but you know best.”

They placed themselves one on each side of the fire; and quietly made their arrangements for a night of watching, diversified by no other amusement than frequent libations of porter; for at the urgent request of Tarleton, to whom the reek of tobacco was a deadly offence, they had been interdicted from smoking: and except a few words of broken conversation, they passed the night in silence; indulging one at a time, as if by an established system, in a short doze, which appeared in no degree to

deaden their acute perception of every thing that took place around them.

Tarleton was seated at a table in front of the fire, on which were several books : and the dull light of a single candle only faintly illumined the room. His person had been minutely searched after the parting interview with Emma Woodford and his son ; and he knew that the scrutiny would not be again repeated. The time which he selected for the removal of the minute poignard from its place of concealment was when his guardians were changed. There was then a greater number of eyes around him ; but he judged rightly that the bustle of the moment would be most favourable to his purpose ; and unperceived the deadly instrument was secreted in his vest.

Midnight was long past. The snatches of conversation between the two men became shorter, and their intervals of dog-sleep more lengthened : but they never amounted to a loss of consciousness ; nor could the prisoner make the slightest movement without their perceiving it.

Tarleton continued leaning over his volume,

and appeared buried in its contents. He placed his right hand within his vest, but without altering his attitude or casting a glance at his guardians. Both noticed the action—looked keenly at him for a moment, but nothing in his look or manner excited suspicion; and they resumed their semi-dormant state.

Slowly and cautiously seizing the steel by its flattened end, he placed the point against his heart; and with a steady hand buried it once,—twice,—thrice,—in his side. So little pain attended the wounds, that had he not felt each time a convulsive sensation as if a strong cord had been drawn tightly round his chest, he would have doubted whether the instrument had reached any vital part. A fourth time he drove it into his flesh; and with such force, that the highly tempered and brittle steel, striking against the rib, broke in the wound. The pain at the moment was so intense that he started; and both the men were at once on the alert: but he raised his left hand to his forehead, and muttering aloud, “My brain aches to distraction,” leant his head over the table.

At length he felt the warm blood trickling down his side ; he resumed the volume he had been studying, and strove to fix his mind on its contents ; but in vain. Every faculty was strained to detect the first sensation of diminished strength : he feared that the blood had ceased to flow, or at least flowed so slowly, that no vital part could have been touched. The agonizing fear now intruded itself, that the loss of blood, though not sufficient to destroy his life, would so enfeeble him, that when the ignominious hour came, he should disgrace himself by unmanly weakness. The idea filled him with horror, and dreadful was the period of suspense.

The two men had been indulging in a longer conversation than usual : they now were silent, and a faint sound caught Tarleton's ear. Again and again it was repeated in quick succession. It was his blood dropping on to the stone floor. Never in the happiest moment of his life had he felt joy so intense. He knew that he had freed himself from the degrading exhibition which his mind, morbidly sensitive,

had dreaded a thousand times worse than death ; and had dreaded more and more as each succeeding hour passed on.

A new fear alarmed him ; the sound was so distinct, so loud, for so it seemed to his excited sense, that the keepers must hear it : they would detect him, and even now frustrate his design. He looked from the one to the other ; they appeared half asleep ; he dared not by speaking attempt to drown the noise ; for to arouse them would increase the danger. Before long he felt a sinking at the heart, and a calm heavy sleepiness gained upon him : he hailed it with delight. The blood which flowed from his breast had found some other channel, and reached the floor without noise. He knew that it *did* reach it, for by degrees the floor around his chair became a pool of blood, which slowly extended itself towards the hearth.

His strength began to fail : his eye dwelt once again on the page which had been his solace and delight, but its sense no longer reached him : and he sank back in his chair.

The movement aroused one of the keepers. "Well, Master," he said, "how fares it by this time?"

Tarleton returned a few words of answer; and the man, folding his arms, was again composing himself to sleep, when his eye glanced on the floor: he started up, and shouted in a voice of rage and alarm—"Jim! Jim!—I say! Hell and the Devil! we are done! the man's killed himself!"

They both rushed towards Tarleton; and with rude violence uncovering his breast, perceived the wounds from one of which the blood was slowly welling at intervals. He attempted no resistance, but said in a sarcastic tone, "Your zeal is too late, Sirs; I have escaped you."

"Jim," cried the man who had been first aroused; "run for your life to the Governor; tell him;—and bring the surgeon.—It will be all right yet.—Yes, my fine fellow, we'll manage to keep you alive till eight o'clock, never fear it. Jim," he continued, "be as quick as lightning. I'll stop the bleeding."

The man he addressed had already left the

cell ; and in less than five minutes the surgeon, the head-gaoler, and a crowd of assistants were pressing round the dying man. He knew that he had escaped from their power, and a smile of triumph passed over his face, now pallid as death itself.

The surgeon rapidly and skilfully applied a powerful bandage over the side. As he completed it, he whispered to the Governor, " It is all useless, he must sink in an hour."

" Curse the cheating villain !" cried one of the baffled guardians, who knew that no slight punishment would attach to their neglect ; " Curse the cheating villain ! it was his poking over his books that's done us. Why can't we hang him up at once, your honour, alive or dead, and let him bleed away there, and be d——d to him ? I'll take my Bible-oath I never closed my eyes all the blessed night."

The Governor of the prison sternly bade him and his companion leave the cell. He himself and the surgeon alone remained. The latter, placing himself by the side of the bedstead on which the dying man was laid, took his hand in his, and with prolonged attention felt his

pulse. The action brought back to Tarleton's mind with fearful vividness the place and time when he had last seen this done. Forrester's dying form appeared as absolutely present before him as when it lay on the thick soft grass red with his blood, and he had stood over it, unable to withdraw his eyes from the convulsed features of his victim. So violent a shuddering extended itself through his whole frame, that his instant death was expected. It continued some minutes ; but at length he mastered his feelings, and with a calm and dignified composure awaited his end.

The good clergyman soon entered the cell. He knelt by the bedside of the unhappy man ; and in a voice tremulous with pity and emotion, again proffered to him the words of eternal life. Tarleton exerted himself to speak : " You have my thanks, Sir, for your well-intended zeal. It is thrown away. My belief is as fixed, as unchangeable as your own. I appeal to the charity which dignifies your creed : it should induce you to let me pass hence undisturbed."

These were the last words that passed his

lips. To the mild remonstrances, to the earnest appeals, which the good man, zealous even when success was hopeless, still continued to make, he returned no further answer, but with a feeble movement of his hand waved him from him ; and, as if at once to separate himself from all external objects which might distract his mind, resolutely closed his eyes, which he never again opened. His life ebbed gradually away without a single groan, and with no struggle, except that one short, sharp convulsion which separates life from death,—that one brief agony, which who can behold and doubt that an immortal spirit is then sundered from its earthly dwelling ?

Who shall presume to know what change may have come over the stern spirit of this unhappy man ere the irrevocable moment was past : what were his closing thoughts in that dark speechless interval before consciousness fades away ? Some ray of heavenly light may even then have pierced the cloud of error : even then he may have found mercy at the hands of an insulted God !

Thus ended the career of Philip Tarleton in

the prime of manhood. High talents, lofty and aspiring thoughts, courage, energy, eloquence, the advantages of manner and person, and many of the rarer elements of character which lead to success in life, were all thrown away and lost. What circumstances, trivial perhaps and unimportant in themselves, first gave the bias towards evil, were unknown; but long before he left his father's roof he had permitted his passions to master his judgment without a struggle; nor had conscience or remorse ever power in after years to check his downward course.

CHAPTER XV.

SEVERAL months had elapsed, and the spring of another year was far advanced, before Miss Chamberlayne returned to East Leighton. After a residence of considerable duration with Mrs. Dobson, her again beloved friend and school-fellow, she migrated into Devonshire, where the mild serenity of the climate and the polite attentions of one or two somewhat antiquated Majors on half-pay in the vicinity of Exeter, completed the cure; and when again she gladdened the groves of East Leighton with her presence, Popsy Wopsy tottered close to her side without the pale blue ribbon.

To her sorrow—yes, to her sorrow—Jane Mackenzie was still Jane Mackenzie; but every thing was arranged and settled for her changing that name before long. When on

her approaching the village the fair spinster's eye first caught sight of the Manor-house, she was oppressed by a considerable variety of her former feelings, and she regretted that her return had not been delayed until the fatal catastrophe was over. But her garden, which was her only solace during the intervals of love, was beginning to resume its splendours, and she could not bear to be absent from her favourite roses.

Few changes had taken place during her absence. Mrs. Forrester, who was now in affluent circumstances, had for several months past been residing with her two daughters at Harrowgate, the mineral springs of which had restored Caroline to a degree of health and strength which her anxious mother had never dared to hope for. Clara was now again returned to East Leighton, and her time was divided between the Manor-house and Rylands.

The great object of the anxiety and interest of all the circle was, of course, the absent Lionel. The terror and foreboding with which all to whom he was dear had witnessed his departure had in a great degree subsided, except

in the anxious bosom of his mistress ; and even she by degrees permitted her hopes to outweigh her fears.

The whole tenor of Walsingham's conduct authorized these hopes. He was no longer spoken of as a wild intemperate young man : but was considered as likely to become one of the best officers in the army. One or two services, which required caution as well as courage, had been entrusted to him. In these he had acquitted himself with ability ; had been mentioned in terms of high praise in one of the public despatches ; and had been again promoted. In short, he was a changed man. His promotion had removed him back to his old regiment, in which his thoughtless audacious bravery had so endeared him to the men, that his change of character was a subject of no little discussion and surprise. To use their own term, ' the handle to his name, the my Lord Viscount,' had spoilt as pretty a young fellow as ever stepped in shoe-leather. ' He might do very well,' they said, ' for a field officer ; but all his love of fighting for the fun of the thing was dead and gone.' They softened down

their censure, however, by admitting that the Viscount, and not the man, was to blame.

Edward Wheatley, now the second Sergeant-major of the regiment, and probably as handsome and soldier-like looking a fellow as ever stood with his hand to his cap to receive a Colonel's orders, could not well endure these shades of censure upon his young Lord ; and deeming the real cause of the change in his character the more pardonable of the two, took care that it should not long remain a secret. It caused a great alteration in the opinions of the orators of the guard-room. Lionel was now pitied rather than blamed : he was considered, poor fellow, as little better than an actual married man : and when a fine young fellow does get into such a scrape as that, of course it spoils him ; but his friends, who are more fortunate, should not be too hard upon him. This reasoning, and his having sabred two French grenadiers in the last general action, restored him in some slight degree to his former popularity.

Among the officers very nearly the same process was carried on. Walsingham was an especial favourite with them all. They rallied

him on his love-sick looks, his solitary moonlight walks, and the hour after hour which he devoted to letter-writing. He bore it all with great good-humour; and replied to their raillery in the same tone. Even in the hour of danger, when death was doing as he pleased around them, many a gay jest was launched against him, and was as gaily repelled.

In a camp the whole chance of amusement depends upon the jest, the folly of the hour; and in the present case this was not wanting. In the same division of the army, and quartered in the same town, there was a young officer of nearly equal rank with Lionel, whose delight in hard blows had always been somewhat too much regulated by discretion. When Walsingham's unhappy condition became generally known and deplored, Lord Oakthorpe at once expressed the most unbounded sympathy with him, the most sincere compassion. He began to copy Lionel in his habits of seclusion, in his moonlight walks, and what our young friend could have dispensed with, was perpetually seeking his society, and divulging all the multiplied agonies which his headlong valour

was inflicting upon a certain Lady Cecilia. His sighs and his moral reflections became more and more frequent: and the Mess was given distinctly to understand, that he perfectly knew,—knew but too well,—what Walsingham's sufferings were, poor fellow! and that, by heaven! it was too great a trial for any man's patriotism.

This similarity of amorous suffering once established, his Lordship began to build rather largely upon it. If the tender passion was a sufficient apology for Walsingham's not running into danger, Lord Oakthorpe considered that it would equally justify his running out of it: and on more than one occasion his practice very nearly exemplified his theory.

His brother officers were not slow to discover what all this meant; and endless was the merriment which resulted from it. They all agreed that the only course to be pursued was to send both the sufferers home to be married:—that Walsingham would come back cured in a very few weeks: and that perhaps the Commander-in-Chief might as well extend Lord Oak-

thorpe's leave of absence till after the first christening.

Lord Oakthorpe's calamities long continued to amuse the gay set: but young Walsingham, their favourite and their pride—for such he was, both with the officers and the men—was no longer amongst them.

In one of the partial actions which ushered in the proud day of Albuhera—the most sanguinary perhaps of all the well-contested fields in the Peninsula—he had been detached with the two flank companies of his regiment to protect some buildings which formed one of the extreme points of the line of operations. At the distance of a quarter of a mile there was one of our redoubts, the maintaining of which was of paramount importance to the success of the day. This battery was in full view of Walsingham's position; and he perceived that it was menaced by a strong body of French cavalry and infantry. Lionel's orders left him no discretion as to quitting his post to support the guns; and although he knew that the point he defended was of slight impor-

tance compared to the other, he dared not leave it.

The French attacked the battery with murderous violence, and with a force so overwhelming that in a few minutes it was in their possession ; two-thirds of its defenders being killed or disabled. The French cavalry then dashed off to a distant quarter of the field.

The most arduous moment of a soldier's life is that in which he finds himself compelled to act on his own responsibility, and to exceed or even disobey his orders. Lionel, young in command and diffident of his own judgment, felt this strongly ; he felt also, that he should be leading almost to certain destruction the brave men around him : and the reflection came upon his heart with a bitter pang, that he should now, by voluntarily throwing himself into danger, falsify all his professions of self-control. The remembrance of his father crossed his mind ; the image of his beloved Clara, her anguish, her despair, were all present to him : and the brave young man trembled and turned pale. But he knew the great importance of the redoubt, which had been captured, to the general

issue of the battle ; and it was a higher and nobler motive than the indulgence of a reckless courage which decided him.

The pause of indecision was far shorter than the time which we have occupied in describing it ; and a few words only were required to communicate his determination to the officers under him. The soldiers, who were drawn up close around him, were keen observers of their youthful commander. They remarked that the depression on his countenance gave place to stern decision ; his colour rose and his eye flashed.

“ Dong the lad,” said an old sergeant of grenadiers, the company in which Lionel had served as Ensign, “ Dong the lad ! I thought he’d never hold out ;—he’s got his old fighting look on again : the devil is up in him : and I’d advise the Mounseers to look about them ; he’s not biting his lip for nothing.”

It needed no eloquence on Lionel’s part to impress his own energy on the heart of every man around him. They cleared the distance between their position and the captured guns in a space of time incredibly short ; formed, and

rushed upon the enemy with their bayonets, with a force which no troops in the world, however brave,—and there are none braver than the French,—can resist or equal. So rapidly had the attack been made, so little had it been expected from a body of men not one-fifth as numerous as themselves, that the French were unprepared to resist it. The carnage on both sides was dreadful ; but at length the English regained possession of their guns, and turned them upon the retreating enemy.

Of one hundred and eighty gallant fellows, whom Walsingham had led on to the assault, more than two-thirds had fallen ; and the survivors,—nearly every one of whom was wounded,—after one loud shout of victory, threw themselves breathless and exhausted on the ground.

Their brave young leader was not one of these. He had been seen in the very thickest of the fight, urging his men to victory, his sword whirling round his head with the rapidity of lightning, and inflicting wounds, such as almost to realize the fables of Italian romance. Edward Wheatley had been last seen

close to his side; he also was not among the survivors.

Anxiously was their commander sought for amidst the mass of slain,—for such, without exaggeration it might be termed; since, in a space of less than one hundred yards, more than four hundred French and English, dying and dead, were heaped together. The young nobleman and Edward Wheatley were found close together. Wheatley was a lifeless corpse, but Walsingham still breathed. His right arm had been nearly severed by the stroke of a sabre, which had cut entirely through the bone; and he had received two other severe wounds.

When carried to the rear, the exhaustion from excessive loss of blood was so great that the surgeons feared each moment, as one fainting fit succeeded to another, that life would become extinct. But after many days, during which life and death were suspended in the scale, some faint hopes were entertained of his recovery.

Lionel had borne his sufferings, and the an-

nouncement which had been made to him of his more than probable death, with the resignation which becomes a brave man ; but no sooner was he informed that, although his ultimate recovery was still doubtful, he might linger some weeks, than a resistless desire seized him to return to his native country, and to close his eyes in the presence of those he loved.

The medical attendants pronounced the attempt to be madness ; that his only chance was in being kept perfectly quiet ; and that, weakened as he was, the exertion of the journey must destroy him. Their opinions and advice were thrown away. A feverish excitement was brought on by their opposing his determination : and as the effect of this was more to be dreaded than anything else, they at length gave their unwilling consent.

The journey to the coast reduced him to a fearful state of weakness. During the voyage he rallied, and there was some firmness in the step with which he landed on the shores of dear England. But the journey to Rylands again reduced him to the very verge of the grave : and when the Earl and his sisters beheld the ema-

ciated form and the pallid death-like features of him whom they had last seen in all the pride of health and strength, they could not disguise their anguish, and wept aloud.

The young man bore this painful trial with much constancy. His own opinion had been long made up, that his days were numbered ; and now that he was once again under his father's roof, his only remaining anxiety was to be allowed an interview with Clara Forrester without an hour's delay. In his eagerness to be one day sooner at Rylands he had taxed his strength too severely in his last day's journey ; yet, exhausted as he was, he was earnest in his entreaties to be permitted at once to proceed to the Manor-house. His father peremptorily refused this ; and unwillingly Lionel retired to his chamber.

Wilkinson was sent for ; but he was at a distant village, attending a cottager's wife, who was in great danger ; and it would probably be many hours before he could quit her bedside. Lionel would not allow any other medical man to be sent for ; he assured his father that he did not want their aid, that his

servant perfectly knew all that he required; and his mind dwelt on nothing but his interview with Clara on the morrow.

At the Earl's request, Hardinge and his niece were early at the castle; and Lionel, who could not be persuaded to remain in his chamber, was lying on one of the couches in the library, anxiously awaiting their arrival. As Clara, with an agitated and rapid step, her figure bending forward as if each moment she would sink to the ground, traversed the wide apartment, the young man rose up to meet her. She had been prepared to see a fearful change; but his sunken and ghastly features, his bandaged shoulder, his emaciated figure, which, thin as he was, looked gigantically tall, were so fearful a contrast to the Lionel Walsingham she had last parted from, that she thought her heart would break in her efforts to conceal her emotion.

It was a natural feeling, which, for a moment, tinged the young man's cheek with red. He longed to assure her, that, changed and mutilated as he was, he held her exonerated from every promise she had given him; but

he knew that the words would wound her generous heart ; and he forbore to utter them.

As Hardinge, with affectionate warmth, shook him by the hand, Lionel, their former discussions dwelling upon his mind, said, with a faint smile, "You remember our walk among the hills, my dear Hardinge."

Our hero would have given the world to have said, that he trusted, before long, they should again be there together ; but he could not look at the ghastly form before him, and bring his lips to utter the words.

By degrees, the bitter feeling of the meeting somewhat subsided ; and Clara, bending over her sick lover's couch, breathed into his ear accents of affection and love, so gentle, so kind, so genuine, that he forgot pain, despair, every thing, in the delight of beholding and listening to her. But the Earl well knew that the interview had been a most trying one to both of them, and he peremptorily insisted upon its termination.

In two or three hours' time, Wilkinson made his appearance ; hot, and covered with mud up to his shoulders, for he had galloped

his poney through an infinity of dirty lanes. His affection for Lionel was most sincere ; and his detention from him, for so many hours after he had heard of his return, had been most painful to him. He entered the library with little of his usual deference of manner ; and with a quick step walked up to the couch on which the Viscount was lying.

His appearance, when he first looked at him, put to a severe test that composure, that control over the countenance, which is one of the most necessary qualifications of a medical man. He seated himself by his side. The interview, which Lionel had dreaded as much as he longed for it, had been gone through ; and he now rallied his old friend on his grave air, and the hurry he was in to commence his attack upon him.

Country apothecaries are almost always considered, each in his own sphere of action, as either the most ignorant, or the most skilful of all the medical men upon earth ; generally the latter, for they attack us when the mind is at the weakest ; and if they once get the ascendancy, they are sure to keep it. Wilkin-

son was deemed a perfect oracle at Ryland Castle ; and the Earl, and the two beautiful girls, who were pale with anxiety, awaited, in breathless impatience, to catch the first indication of his opinion.

The Doctor again and again felt the young man's pulse, who, as he did so, shook his head, and smiled. He felt and sounded over every part of his broad chest, which—its powerful muscles shrunk up and lost—was now one fearful succession of bony ridges. He again seated himself, and again dwelt attentively on the pulse of his patient.

After indulging in an enormous pinch of snuff, and passing his fingers through his extremely ill-arranged hair, as he was always accustomed to do, when he was very much in earnest, “Mr. Lionel,” he said, “can a man wrestle without his right arm?”

“Very little, I fear, my dear Doctor,” answered Walsingham.

“I am devilish sorry for it,” exclaimed Wilkinson,—“I beg your pardon, young ladies, but I *am* devilish sorry for it; for if a man could, I'd engage in three months' time to

make the Viscount strong enough to throw any man in the next six counties."

The old Earl had been an anxious looker-on during this scene. The first ray of hope which Wilkinson's words imparted to him, completely overcame him: he leant back in his chair, covered his face with his handkerchief, and sobbed violently. Both the girls, their faces bathed in tears of joy, approached to soothe him.

"Emily," he cried, "order the carriage this instant; you shall go and tell Clara what Wilkinson says. But, my dear friend, what certainty can you have of this?"

Wilkinson had got over the first excitement of his own feelings; and now gave way to a little of the air of medical importance, and that tone of humility, which a man assumes when he is particularly well pleased with himself. "Why, my dear Lord, nothing is certain in this world: but I'd bet every penny I have that I am right. It is extremely impertinent of me, to set up my opinion against that of Inspectors General, and Deputy Inspectors General, and all the other long names of

them : but I say, my Lord, that the Viscount understood his own case better than they all did put together. That sea voyage has done more for him, than they, or the whole College of Physicians either, could have done. I'll bet my life that Mr. Lionel is safe."

Wilkinson's augury was correct. His native air, youth, and a constitution, which had never been tampered with, enabled the young nobleman to falsify the opinions of all the long-titled authorities of the medical staff. The benign influence of the most affectionate heart, and the brightest pair of eyes in the three kingdoms, may have assisted Wilkinson in his mode of treatment ; but certain it is, that at the end of six weeks, Lionel was perfectly out of danger, after having withstood a greater strain upon his constitution, than perhaps any man had ever before undergone, and lived to enjoy perfect health.

CHAPTER XVI.

WHEN returning strength enabled Lionel to extend his excursions beyond the Park, one of his earliest expeditions was to the summit of the Mendip Hills, accompanied by his friend Charles Hardinge, on whose strong arm the invalid did not disdain to lean. They sought the same spot on which their former conference was held. The year was more advanced than when they had last enjoyed the glorious view ; and instead of the white blossoms of the spring the prospect now glowed with the rich hues of autumn, and the broad corn-fields waved with gold.

Walsingham's heart was full : he gazed on the glorious scene for some time in silence ; and Hardinge did not think worse of his young friend's manhood when he detected that a tear of gratitude dimmed his eye. With frankness Lionel recurred to the wild folly of his former

plans of life ; he candidly blamed himself for having disregarded the entreaties of his father, and the counsel of wiser heads than his own ; and confessed how little he deserved the happiness that now awaited him.

“ But, my dear Charles Hardinge,” he said, winding up his confession of past errors, as people generally do, with praises of his present wisdom, “ all these follies are over. I am twenty years a wiser and more prudent man than when you last took me to task on this very spot.”

“ I am heartily glad to hear it, Lionel ; but cannot your modesty induce you to give some small share of the merit to the French soldier, who relieved you of the incumbrance of your right arm ? My dear fellow, do you suppose there are any of us who do not know the exact worth of your magnanimous prudence ?”

“ Come, Hardinge, nine men out of ten of my age, and as high in the profession as I am, would not have given it up because they lost an arm ; and if I thought that every one else was as blind to my virtuous forbearance as you are, I’d be in Spain again in a month’s time.”

“ I’m not afraid of you,” said Hardinge, laughing ; “ I was instructed by yourself, here on this very spot, in the particular objects which constituted your military ambition ; and they very much depended on the accidental circumstance of possessing a right arm. We are not afraid of you, Lionel.”

They descended the hill, and by the same path as on their former ramble. Lionel stopped at the place where they had met Edward Wheatley. “ Poor fellow !” he said, “ the French bayonets killed him at Albuhera ; but his heart was broken long before. A man’s heart may be broken, Hardinge, though he wear a proud look, and keep his misery to himself. Edward Wheatley was as good and as brave a soldier as ever stepped ; but he never got over the loss of his Spanish mistress.”

Hardinge adverted to the circumstances attending his death—“ Yes,” said Lionel ; “ I have owed my life to him twice. He saved me from that wretched Tarleton’s pistol at Cheddar ; and when I was wounded at Albuhera he was close by my side ; and the last thing I

saw was his sword cutting down the French soldier who had disabled me ; and who was about to repeat the blow. His body was found lying across me. It was only then that his attachment to the bright-eyed Andalusian was discovered. Next to the poor fellow's breast they found a lock of raven black hair wrapt up in a very tender letter, half in Spanish and half in broken English."

" And what was the fate of the fair lady ?" enquired Hardinge.

" Oh, it was the old Spanish story. She was sent to a convent, and forced to take the veil. I can assure you, Hardinge, that independent of the love-adventures of the Subalterns, who are of course allowed to be as romantic as they please, as many tales of love and madness might be gleaned from one campaign among the hills of Spain, as would keep the writers of military novels in love scenes for the next forty years."

It was two or three weeks after this excursion that Clara and Lionel were sitting tête-à-tête in the oak parlour. He was resting himself there for a few hours, as he did most days,

extreme disinclination to exercise whenever he got near the Manor-house being almost the only symptom of weakness which the young soldier had not thrown off. Clara was seated at the library table, which was covered much less with books than with white satin ribbon ; which, with her lover's extremely valuable assistance, she was fabricating into a vast assortment of marriage favours; when in walked Judge Hannah, and delivered a note to her young mistress with the two usual words, ' Bill Batts ;' and smiling, as she always did, when transmitting documents from the Bower.

The note was as follows :—

“ MY DARLING CLARA,

“ Will my sweet, my incipient, my embryo Viscountess,—pardon, dearest Clara, the fond, the sportive, the predictive phrase !—will she be the channel of a wish as pure as ever the breath of friendship whispered to the ear of truth ?—Yes ! yes ! she will. Next Thursday week is the day,—oh ! may bountiful heaven shower down upon it all its purest, its most fragrant wreaths of happiness and joy !—next Thursday week is

the day on which your amiable young friend, whose powerful mind has almost miraculously enabled her to cast off her long-cherished woes,—it is the day on which she bestows her hand. Yes, next Thursday week, if the joy-creating voice of fame be true, is selected for the pleasing, the sublime, the awful ceremony ! Will Miss Mackenzie accept my frail, my fond, my friendly assistance on that agitating morn ? Will she enrol my ambitious name among the choir of her bridal virgins ? From my earliest youth I have experienced for him all the affection of a sister's heart. To witness the moment when the seal of fate stamps his happiness for ever with the pure voice of religion's holiest, sublimest, noblest rite, would be to me a source of pleasure unspeakable, undefined, and all-enduring !

“ Will my darling Clara,—but oh, with secrecy and by degrees,—touch the chords of her amiable young friend's ideas on this, perhaps too intrusive, too ambitious point ? and will she let her rapid, her graceful crow-quill reverberate the response ? But oh, remember,

my dearest, dearest Clara, that such an aspiration as this demands no common exertion of cautious delicacy and deliberate care !

“ Adieu, adieu,

“ ISABELLA.”

Clara and Lionel determined that no time was to be lost in opening this important negotiation ; they therefore at once proceeded to Mrs. Mackenzie’s cottage, and, very little to their surprise, found Hardinge there, who, having lately, like the convalescent soldier, got very much into the habit of over-fatiguing himself with walking, was under the necessity of resting at the cottage during the chief part of every morning.

A private and mysterious interview took place between Clara and the young Scotchwoman, and then she and Walsingham posted off to Eglantine Bower, where a second private and mysterious interview took place : and from that hour Miss Chamberlayne’s whole heart and soul were engrossed and wrapped up in speculations regarding laces, lawns, satins, muslins, and all the awful labours of the toilet.

It was not until the day next but one before the important morning that the bride-maid's dress was completed, was tried on, was admired by Mrs. Wilkinson and Miss Penelope, and was folded up, strewed over with lavender and rose leaves, and locked up in the self-same top long drawer which we have formerly mentioned. During all this long period of active exertion her courage and resolution had remained unshaken; but no sooner was her mind unoccupied,—no sooner had her long-subdued but never-eradicated feelings leisure to prey upon themselves,—than terrors seized upon her mind, which each hour increased. At first she surmised, then she feared, then she thought, and at length she became quite convinced, that she never could support herself throughout the ceremony, that she should faint, go into hysterics, perhaps drop down dead, and disgrace herself for ever before all the parish.

She never slept through the whole of Tuesday night; at least she heard the clock several times. She felt that she should kill herself in the struggle; and she was convinced that, at all events,

she should look wretchedly plain and unlike herself. She vacillated until dinner time, and then at length very wisely made up her mind : wrote a short note to Clara, explaining that she was suffering under the severest cold she ever had in the whole course of her life, and imploring her to make her apologies to Miss Mackenzie. She then was enabled to eat her dinner ;—it was the first food she had enjoyed since her gown had been finished,—and went to bed with a determination not to get up till the ceremony was all over.

When the fatal morn arrived, Phœbe, whose place was to be supplied by Mrs. Battersby, was ordered to hang up the new gown where her mistress could see it as she lay, and was then sent to the church, with express directions to get as close to the altar as she could, and to come back at once and tell her every thing, particularly how the bride was dressed, and how Mr. Hardinge behaved.

The interval was painful to our poor heroine ; but tears led on by degrees to slumber ; and her dreams were happy. She herself stood at the altar in bridal white ; a bridegroom

took her hand—it was not the lord of the Manor-house, nor did she know who it was; but it was a bridegroom, and she was the bride.

The impression on her mind was so vivid, that when Phœbe rushed into her room, all glee and smartness, and with a large bridal favour at her bosom, Miss Chamberlayne listened to all the details without shedding a single tear, with scarcely a sigh—and as the narrative was concluded, she exclaimed:—“ Well, my good Phœbe, God bless them both; and make them happy! and now go and fold up that gown, and put it back into the drawer, and lock it; and I will have my mutton broth, and mashed potatoes, Phœbe; and I’ll try if I can’t get up to tea.”

In a very few months the contents of the top long drawer came into play, for Lionel Walsingham and Clara Forrester were united during the following Christmas, and Miss Chamberlayne was of course invited to take part in the ceremony. The young Viscount had petitioned his mistress to allow the marriage to take place in East Leighton church; it

being greatly his wish that his old and revered friend the Vicar should perform the ceremony. It did not cost Clara a single sigh to forego all the celebrity of an espousal at St. George's, Hanover Square : nay, she bore without repining that the Morning Post should not declare to every part of the known world, the exact shape, make, and texture of her wedding dress. As far as provincial splendour and admiration were of value, nothing was deficient. East Leighton church was crowded to excess, throughout its whole extent, with relatives, friends, tenantry, and the gay joyous peasantry all in their Sunday clothes.

We are perfectly aware that there is no precedent in existence which authorizes our uniting a maimed hero to one of the heroines of our story. All we can say in our own defence is, in the first place, that she is not one of our principal heroines ; and next that, despite the empty sleeve fixed to his button-hole, young Walsingham, as he stood at the altar, the happiness which swelled his heart, tempered and controlled by the awe which the ceremony and the place inspired, was perhaps

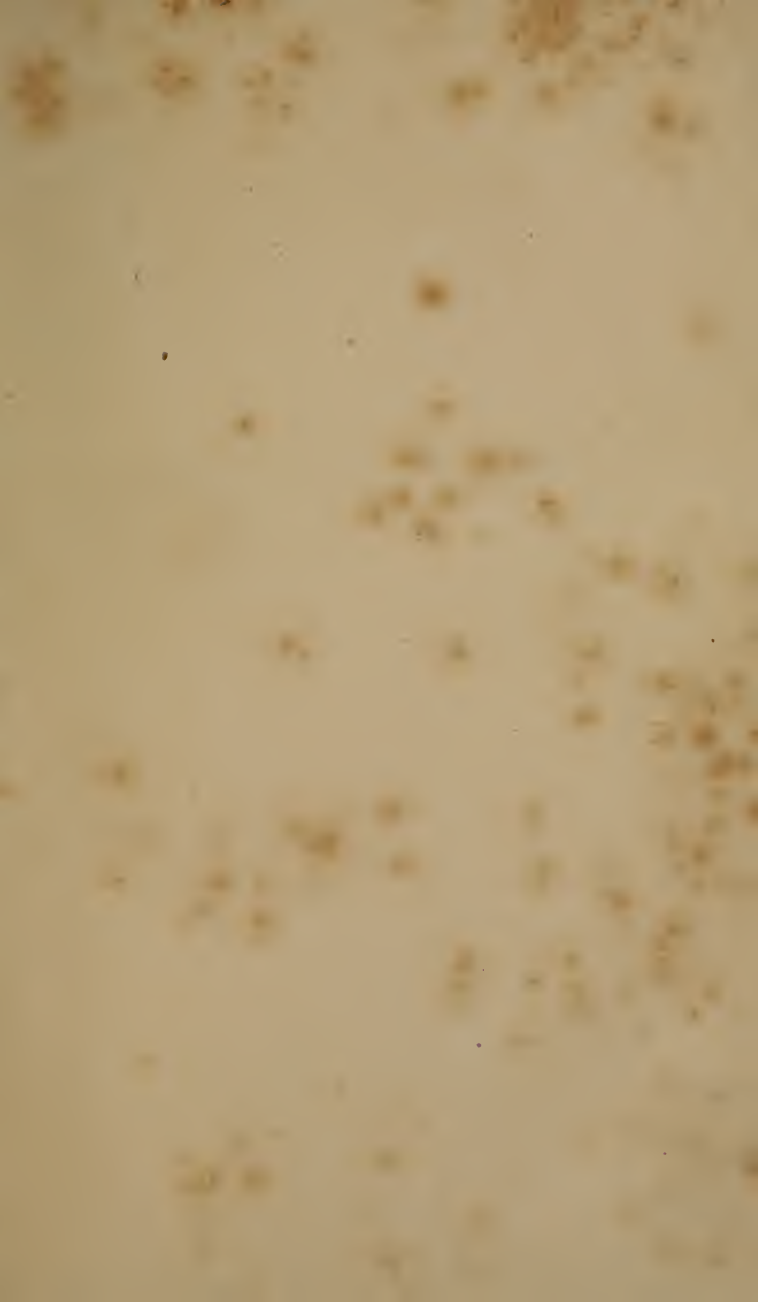
as complete a specimen of manly beauty, as female eyes ever dwelt upon, without immediate annihilation.

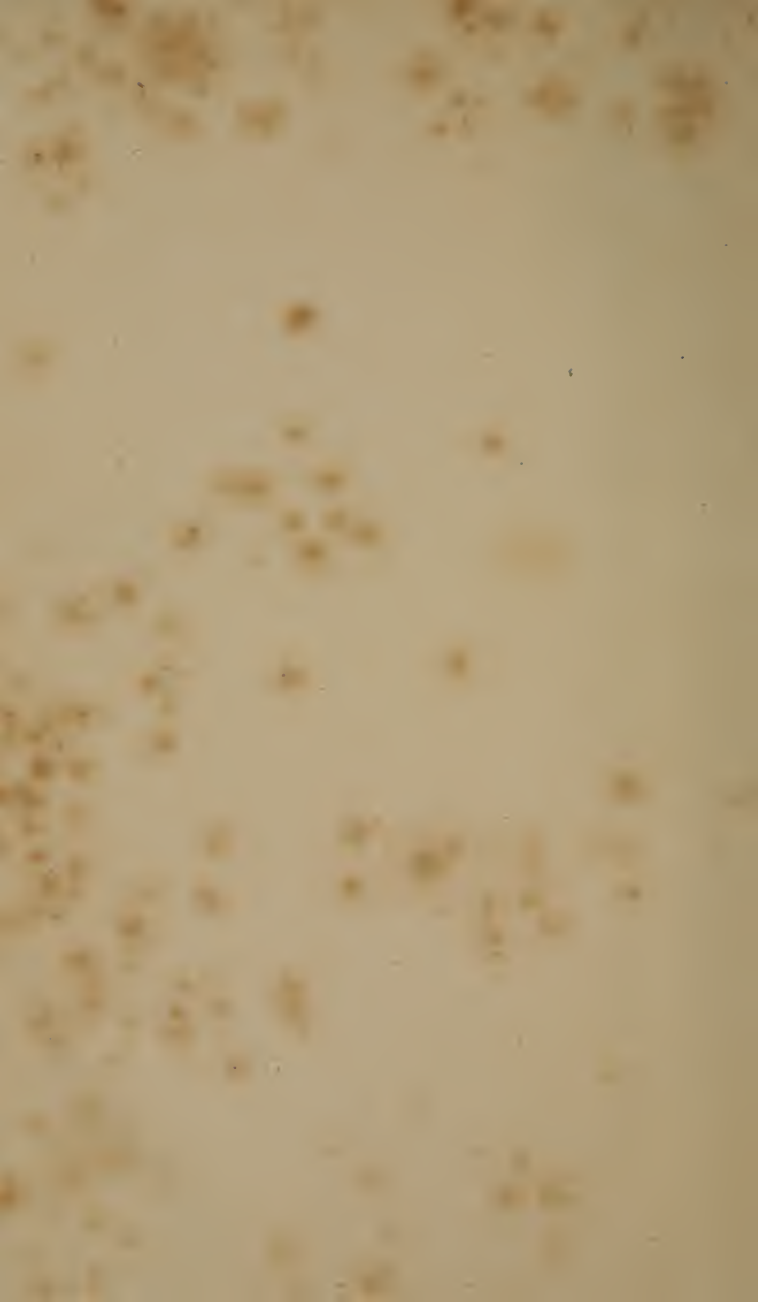
As to Clara Forrester, it would be a waste of words to attempt to describe her. Phœbe, in her three hours' conference with her mistress on the subject, evidently felt this when she said : " It don't signify talking, Ma'am ; but I defy all the people as ever lived to tell how beautiful she did look. I don't know what they may have got up at the King's Court ; but, except that and the angels, there never can have been anything like her since the world began : and oh ! that was a gown ! wasn't it, Ma'am ? and the real lace veil down almost to her beautiful little feet ! and the lovely young Lord, Ma'am, with his poor dear sleeve, and all his medals and crosses : I cried like the rain to look at them."

A succession of pensive sighs was Miss Chamberlayne's chief reply to all this, and to a vast profusion of similar observations ! for although she was now in a state of calm resignation, the ceremonial she had witnessed, and more especially ' the too, too god-like form' of him

who gave away the bride, and a few other little circumstances, had been almost too much for her. She had been one of the four bride-maids, and there was one transaction connected with that station which no change of place, no lapse of time, could ever obliterate from her memory.—It was the salute which Charles Hardinge, claiming the privilege of his office, had impressed upon her pale and tear-besprinkled cheek.

THE END.

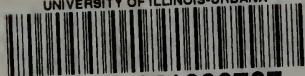








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